



The Grooming of Juan Guaido, Pawn for US Economic Interests in Venezuela

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Donald Trump and Mike Pence declared Juan Guaido, a Venezuelan politician known to fewer than one in five Venezuelans, the President of Venezuela, despite Venezuela's already having a democratically elected president, Nicolas Maduro.

Washington doesn't care though. Washington loves Guaido, even if not everyone has learned his name yet.

So the U.S. is trying to unseat yet another democratically elected head of state to put its own puppet in power. We've *certainly* never heard this before...

[Coughing]

Chile, Iran, Nicaragua, Cuba, Congo, Korea, Angola, Libya

[Coughing]

Sorry, my allergies have been acting up.

"What?"

My allergies? I'm allergic to war? It's a pretty common allergy, I don't know...

The grooming of *Guaido*

So, who is Juan Guaido and why was he chosen to carry out this coup? An expose written by Max Blumenthal and Dan Cohen of the Grayzone Project reveal some pretty damning answers.

As with most U.S.-backed puppet rulers, Guaido was groomed in an American university. Guaido was enrolled in the Governance and Political Management Program at George Washington University in 2007, where he studied under Venezuelan economist Luis Enrique Berrizbeitia.

Berrizbeitia was a former executive director at the IMF and one of the many economists that provided ideological justifications for the exploitative economic, neoliberal system in Venezuela prior to the election of Hugo Chavez. Chavez ousted all of these pseudo-intellectuals from the country and they found refuge here, in American universities and libertarian think tanks.

George Washington University has a history of cultivating operatives of regime change. Syngman Rhee, the U.S.-backed dictator of the newly created Republic of Korea studied at GW.

Rhee brought the Korean Peninsula back under partial Japanese rule after Korean socialists had kicked the Japanese colonizers off the peninsula.

In the same way, Guaido was educated so he could one day plunge Venezuela back into the pre-Chavez neoliberal period, which was rife with massive inflation, poverty, and economic exploitation by foreign capitalists.

GW's mascot is, quite appropriately, the GW colonial... What a creep...

A right-wing activist builds his resume

That same year, Guaido began cultivating his reputation as an activist of the Venezuelan right-wing. Guaido led protests after the Venezuelan government refused to renew the broadcasting license for Radio Caracas Television or RCTV, an opposition propaganda outlet that was known to doctor footage.

Guaido and his fellow classmates also protested Chavez's constitutional referendum to create 21st-century socialism.

One member of this group, Yon Goicoechea, was awarded the Milton Friedman Prize for Advancing Liberty and \$500,000 dollars by Koch brothers-funded libertarian think-tank The Cato Institute for his actions, which helped to successfully tank the constitutional referendum.

These actions brought notoriety to Guaido and his clique, who began calling themselves "Generation 2007."

A tendency to 'overreact'

Just how successful was Generation 2007? Well, they got the attention of the State Department, National Security Council, and the Department of Defense.

A leaked email sent by U.S. Ambassador to Venezuela William Brownfield shows Generation 2007 was on the radar of these departments. The email notes that, while Generation 2007 was not yet capable of challenging the Chavez government, it did create a tendency to "overreact."

This email reveals the plot to overthrow the Bolivarian Revolution did not just spontaneously erupt out of the Venezuelan opposition within the last few months. Rather the United States had carefully groomed Guaido and his friends for over a decade and waited for the right moment to push him forward into the spotlight as the leader of the opposition.

The email also acknowledges the primary strategy of regime change in Venezuela: to intentionally elicit responses to opposition activity, which can then be framed as political persecution or authoritarianism. This tactic can be seen even today when right-wing protesters throw Molotov cocktails at Venezuelan police to try to elicit a violent response.

To capitalize on the anti-Chavez sentiment that Guaido's protests had created, Guaido joined Venezuelan aristocrat Leopoldo Lopez in creating the opposition party that Guaido still represents today called Popular Will. Lopez is a direct descendent of Venezuela's first president, Cristobal Mendoza; and his first cousin, Thor Halvorssen, founded the U.S.-based Human Rights Foundation, a cheerleader for U.S.-backed "humanitarian regime change."

Popular Will's plan to take power was simple. According to leaked emails, the party planned to use the mass electricity shortages and blackouts, caused by the global economic crisis and decline in the oil price in 2010, to blame the Chavez government for mismanagement and gain support for Popular Will.

Also worth noting is that the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) regime-change arm, the National Endowment for Democracy, was funding the Venezuelan opposition to the tune of \$40-50 million a year.

Regime change, take two

This all culminated in a second push to oust a Bolivarian leader, this time Nicolás Maduro, in 2014. The Venezuelan government captured documents detailing a plot by opposition supporter Maria Corina Machado to assassinate Maduro.

Machado previously served as a representative to the Bush administration for the opposition.

In 2014, Guaido was on the ground in Venezuela organizing violent protests in barricaded, opposition-controlled areas called *guarimbas*.

Guarimbas often clashed with the police; this was a period of intense violence in which dozens of people died. *Guarimbas* are known for their use of violent tactics such as burning people alive and using steel wire to decapitate motorcyclists.

The Venezuelan government understandably cracked down on those involved in the violence, many of whom were members of the Popular Will party.

Popular Will's leadership — people like Freddy Guevara, Lester Toledo, Leopoldo Lopez, and Yon Goicoechea — were charged with their respective roles in the violence. Some were arrested, some fled the country and took up lucrative speaking gigs with groups like Human Rights Watch.

With much of Generation 2007 and Popular Will's leadership in prison or marred by the legacy of the violence in 2014, Guaido was one of the only Popular Will members left to carry out the decades-long plot to replace the Bolivarian leader.

Guaido maintained a relatively low profile as a legislator in the National Assembly starting in 2015. While he is hailed as the President of the National Assembly in the media, he held this seat only because the four opposition parties of the National Assembly decided this seat should be on rotation.

In hindsight, it's clear why Trump made this move while Guaido, and not someone else, held this seat; he was their familiar agent on the inside.

One day before that fateful day when Juan Guaido would declare, U.S. Vice President Mike Pence called Guaido to assure him that if he declared himself the new President of Venezuela on the basis of Maduro's illegitimacy, the U.S. would have his back.

And the rest, as they say, is history. Pence and Trump kept their promise and the once-libertarian GW grad student went on to fulfill the destiny forged for him by the Koch brothers and the U.S. diplomatic apparatus.