

# American Thinker

## Could a Trump Factor make a difference in Venezuela?

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As one watches over the massive mega-demonstrations in 12 or 13 cities in Venezuela, known as the Mother of All Marches, it's hard not to be rueful. They've had these giant marches before. They come, they make an showy appearance, and then they disappear. And nothing ever changes. The socialist nightmare so previously praised by Bernie Sanders remains in place: The party continues to expand its grip over the state, and the state continues to extend its grip over the institutions. It's how Fidel Castro consolidated power in Cuba. For all their high hopes, the marchers are up against a regime with incredible staying power. The only possible difference may be the election of Donald Trump.

It's a long shot because it's Castro who's instructing these Chavista narco-terrorist buffoons and thugs on ruling in that vortex of horrors, on how to run a failed state without getting thrown out of power. Venezuela, after all, is the mother of all socialist failures in a nominal democracy. On Johns Hopkins University Professor Steve Hanke's Cato Institute 'Misery Index,' Venezuelatops the chart. It's also the home of the world's worst oil company. Castro survived the Velvet Revolutions of 1989 which toppled one Eastern European communist regime after another, and eventually reached his patron, the Soviet Union. Through sheer shamelessness, and a ruthless willingness to engage in unpunished brutality, Castro held on to power when the others didn't. His experience running Chile in the 1970s (which was in socialist chaos comparable to Venezuela in 1973) taught him much about never letting go of power. Chile's free market rebirth from the rubble of that horror, which led to the restoration of democracy, was a standing rebuke to that power grab - and Castro vowed never again to be defeated this way. Which brings us to Venezuela.

It's almost a foreknowledge that the regime will never give up its grip on power even with these marches. Blogger Daniel Duquenal has explained it succinctly many times. The Chavistas cannot be shamed into giving up their grip on power no matter how extensive their failures. Failure is not a bug but a feature of their socialist project and they know this. And their recent example shows that they cannot be unelected from power either. From Jimmy Carter's endorsement of

obvious electoral fraud in 2004 to the recent horrific moves to disempower the dissident legislature, to the outright jailing of opposition leaders such as Leopoldo Lopez, and the banning of others from office, such as Maria Corina Machado, the avenue of democracy has been shut down too even with numbers so large they cannot cheat.

All the same, there seems to be a critical mass being reached. It may slide into civil war, as Jazz Shaw has observed. There's no Pinochet on the horizon, and what's more, the legislature that triggered and legitimized Pinochet's move in Chile has been neutered. But there may be a Trump factor, too. It's the only significant thing that has changed from the usual pattern.

The Chavista propaganda press is watching the matter closely. Trump's Secretary of State, Rex Tillerson, has made some fiery definitive statements in support of Venezuela's democracy marchers:

"We are concerned that the government of Maduro is violating its own constitution and is not allowing the opposition to ... organize in a way that expresses the views of the Venezuelan people," Tillerson told a news conference. "We are concerned about that situation. We're watching it closely and working with others ... to communicate those concerns."

In light of the Chavista alarm about the U.S. airstrike in Syria over that regime's chemical warfare on civilians, it does raise the possibility that Venezuela's opposition has taken heart from the newly assertive stance on human rights from the United States. The Chavistas are watching it closely even if the mainstream media is not. Tillerson did conclude his remarks with a business-as-usual addition that the U.S. communication with the thug regime would be conducted through the good offices of the Organization of American States, which is just another UN-style talk shop that has gone somewhat assertive about its democracy mandate in recent months. Its stern warnings are getting sterner.

But it's also worth noting that Rex Tillerson is delivering the message. The Chavistas know Tillerson well - during the late Hugo Chavez's expropriations of oil companies, Tillerson, as CEO of ExxonMobil, was famous for not backing down when all the other similarly situated oil companies were caving in. His insistence on contract enforcement eventually led to the bankrupting of Citgo, which had to take all of its assets out of the country to prevent Exxon from snapping them away as compensation. The media billed that as a failure since Exxon did not get all the money it wanted, but for the Chavistas, it was a fiscal disaster. After that, Tillerson angered them further by engaging in exploration contracts with Guyana, in areas where Venezuela has territorial disputes. They know that Tillerson doesn't back down. He's a scourge to them. And his righthand man is career diplomat Tom Shannon, who knows Venezuela intimately. Could there be a Trump factor at work as Tillerson blows fire? One only hopes it can help bring pressure on the Chavistas, helpfully concentrating their minds as the giant protests swirl all around them.