



Venezuela: the Chávez Legacy

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In October 2012 Venezuelan President, [Hugo Chávez](#), stood for a fourth six-year presidential term starting in February 2013, and won the election with 54% of the vote. He was to be sworn in on 10 January 2013, but was unable to return from medical treatment in Cuba for the inauguration.

Hugo Chávez died on 5 March 2013.

Vice President Nicolás Maduro assumed presidential powers and duties after the death of President Chávez, pledging to continue his policies.

Recent opinion polls indicate that he is the favourite to win the special election to be held on 14 April 2013. His main rival is Henrique Capriles Radonski, who leads the Coalition for Democratic Unity.

Venezuela is facing a difficult and potentially volatile time, with political and economic uncertainty, rising violent crime, weak democratic institutions and strained relations with the United States.

This note looks at the politics and economics of the Chávez era, his legacy and future prospects for Venezuela.

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1 Venezuela under Hugo Chávez



Source: [South America News, July 2010](#)

Hugo Chávez led Venezuela for 14 years, remaining very popular, particularly among the poor, because of the social programmes he introduced. His death gave rise to an outpouring of emotion among supporters of *Chavismo* and among many others for whom he had become a heroic, almost religious, figure, often compared with Simón Bolívar, the South American independence hero, and even Joan of Arc.

1.1 The Bolivarian Revolution

When Hugo Chávez first came to power in 1998, he was championed as the President of Venezuela's poor. He helped distribute national wealth, and was seen as a charismatic hero who had brought democracy and freedom to Venezuela, a voice to the neglected and piped water and electricity to the slums of Caracas. Augusto De Venanzi wrote in his book, "[Authoritarianism Versus Welfare Policy: The Two Faces of the Bolivarian Revolution](#)" (2010):

To many of his followers Chávez represents a charismatic and messianic figure. More generally, the political qualities of charisma become explicit in the form of a strong leader who attempts to restore a unitary representation of the world, against the diverse and complex variety of social representations and the feelings of risk and uncertainty that life acquires under global modernization (Lash et al., 1997; Beck, 2002). This historical re-elaboration comprises a fundamental counter-modernization narrative that works to revive feelings of communal and personal security⁴. Such a discourse guarantees the unconditional support to the movement from those groups who harbor feelings of disenchantment with modernization, who feel nostalgia for the predominance of a fractured pre-modern archetype, and who demand the return of a heroic sense in the conception of the nation's history, a sense that president Chávez masterfully introduces in his political speeches. Rangel and Vil Iaruel's (2007) study shows that Chavez's sympathizers tend to see him as having special and

extraordinary qualities; that his actions transpire a mythical and heroic dimension; and that his main concern is with the wellbeing of the poor.

Chávez's Bolivarian revolution, wrote De Venanzi, comprised "two markedly distinct faces":

... a political face that is very much tainted by authoritarian practices and disregard for the democratic process, and a second one marked by the government's attempts at promoting welfare among the most vulnerable sectors of the population. These contrasting faces, it is further argued, are able to account for the high levels of conflict existing around president Chávez's government. At the center of the political conflict stand two diametrically opposed views about the meaning and practice of democracy among Venezuelans of different class extraction.¹

Chávez's first social programme in 1999 under his *Plan Bolívar 2000*, sought primarily to feed the poor. The armed forces distributed food and dental services, although the programme was badly organised and later discredited by accusations of fraud and corruption. This was followed by 'missions' in various areas of social welfare and Government statistics² indicate that Venezuelan social spending had increased from 20.85% in 1993 to 30.97% in 2006. Most of this spending was on education, social security, health, housing, social development, culture and communication, science and technology. The Chávez Government programmes included bringing hundreds of Cuban medics to staff new health centres in some of Venezuela's poorest areas; expropriating large amounts of land from multinational companies to give to subsistence farmers, and building a cable car system to give slum dwellers on the Caracas hillsides access to the centre.³

The [United Nations Human Development Index 2013](#), which considers data on income, education, life expectancy, access to healthcare etc, stated:

Between 1980 and 2012 Venezuela's ... HDI rose by 0.1% annually from 0.629 to 0.748 today, which gives the country a rank of 71 out of 187 countries with comparable data. The HDI of Latin America and the Caribbean as a region increased from 0.574 in 1980 to 0.741 today, placing Venezuela ... above the regional average.

The 2012 [UN Human Development Index](#) had placed Venezuela slightly higher, 73rd out of 187 countries, and according to comparative data from 2006 to 2011, Cuba, Venezuela and Tanzania moved higher up the HDI rank. Venezuela has gradually moved up the HDI over the last decade, although it has not necessarily improved its position among the countries in the Index. [Venezuelaanalysis.com reported in October 2009](#) that "Since Chavez took office in 1999, access to primary health care in Venezuela has increased more than fourfold to nearly 100%, illiteracy has been nearly eradicated, and infant mortality has decreased by more than half". 2010 saw no improvement on 2009, according to a report in the anti-Chávez [El Universal in November 2010](#), which took into account a new methodology for calculating the Index.

Hugo Chávez was a complex leader, who, according to some commentators, did not manage to resolve contradictions in his policies. A [New York Times report on 6 March 2013](#) summarised this ambiguity as follows:

¹ Augusto De Venanzi, 1 January 2010

² Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Planificación y el Desarrollo (2008).

³ [BBC News, 5 March 2013](#)

He was a self-described socialist who expropriated private businesses and property but looked the other way as opportunists enriched themselves off government contracts.

He preached about economic independence and created chains of subsidized grocery stores but neglected agriculture and relied heavily on imported food.

He excoriated capitalists and lectured about service to the country but tolerated or ignored widespread corruption.

He condemned the United States at every turn but depended on it to buy the oil that made his movement possible. He spoke of a people's right to self-determination but allied himself with tyrants in Libya, Syria and Iran.

1.2 Increasing government control

Social welfare improvements accompanied moves towards more centralised rule in Venezuela. From 1999 Hugo Chávez gradually gained control over all Venezuela's state institutions. Constitutional reforms in 1999 removed the second parliamentary chamber, the Senate, and the rules of Congress were amended so that major legislation could be passed with a simple, rather than a two-thirds, majority. Chávez then secured congressional approval for an expansion of the Supreme Court from 20 to 32 justices and allegedly filled the new posts with his supporters.

President Chávez was Commander in Chief of the army and an urban reserve force established in 2004. The 1999 constitutional amendments removed congressional oversight of military affairs, allowing Chávez to purge disloyal generals and promote his supporters. Chávez also commanded the National Electoral Council, which oversees elections, and the state-owned oil company, PDVSA, which provides most of the Government's revenue.

In 2009 a constitutional referendum allowed term limits on the presidency and other public officials to be overturned. 54.4% voted for the amendment to the Constitution and 45.6% against, giving Hugo Chávez a clear mandate to run again for president. The Opposition pointed to the loss of checks and balances as a result of all power being vested in the executive. Many felt that Venezuela's tradition of a free press and pluralist politics had been increasingly undermined by the Government in recent years. In 2009 Chávez signed a law imposing media censorship, forcing the closure of more than 30 radio stations and two local TV stations that had been critical of his government.⁴ In June 2010 the Government established the *Centro de Estudio Situacional de la Nación*, which was described as a "censorship office", able to suppress opposition views and information critical of the regime. Guillermo Zuloaga, co-owner of the last main media company, Globovisión, and an opposition sympathiser, was arrested.

1.3 The 2012 presidential election

On 7 October 2012 President Hugo Chávez stood in presidential elections for a fourth six-year term beginning in February 2013. The two main parties contesting the election were the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (*Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela* - PSUV) and the Justice First party. Hugo Chávez was supported by the Great Patriotic Pole coalition (*Gran Polo Patriótico* - GPP). In early 2012 most opinion polls had put him in the lead, although many voters were then still undecided.⁵ In early September 2012 the Venezuelan polling

⁴ See [Amnesty International 20 October 2011](#)

⁵ "[Venezuela's Chavez leads rival in latest poll](#)", *Reuters*, 27 March 2012

agency, *Datanálisis*, gave Hugo Chávez a percentage point lead. Other polling agencies “close to the government” gave Chávez a lead of more than 20 points.⁶

Chávez’s main opponent in the election was [Henrique Capriles Radonski](#), a 40-year-old lawyer and governor of the state of Miranda, Venezuela’s second most populous state, which includes a large part of the capital, Caracas. Capriles was backed by the Coalition for Democratic Unity (*Mesa de la Unidad Democrática* - MUD). Capriles opposed further nationalisations and made education his flagship policy.⁷ His political inspiration was Brazil’s former charismatic president, Luiz Inácio (Lula) da Silva. By the end of September 2012 Capriles was “ahead in several polls, while trailing by as much as 15 percentage points in others”.⁸

The [Venezuela Solidarity Campaign](#) maintained that there was an international campaign of misinformation, led by the US administration, seeking to undermine support for Hugo Chávez. In December 2011 the [BBC reported](#) that President Barack Obama had accused the Venezuelan Government of threatening “basic democratic values” ahead of the 2012 elections, while other reports maintained the US Administration had ear-marked special funding for anti-Chávez groups in the run-up to elections.

The Labour MP, Grahame Morris, was one of several UK MPs who signed a [letter in April 2012](#) accusing the US of interventionism in Venezuela:

Evidence has revealed that the coup plotters received backing from US government agencies. Since then US government interventions into Venezuela’s democracy have continued – mainly through tens of millions of dollars in funding to opposition movements. Concerns have been expressed that this is to strengthen those backing the free-market policies and multi-nationals’ control of Venezuela’s huge oil reserves that dominated Venezuela’s past. On 7 October 2012 Venezuelans will be voting in a Presidential election. It is for the Venezuelan people alone to choose their next government, free from any external intervention.

Other commentators disagreed or did not think an unstable Venezuela would be in the US’s interest. Patrick D. Duddy,⁹ wrote in September 2012: “Political instability and violence in Venezuela would damage U.S. efforts to promote democracy, increase regional cooperation, combat narcotics, and protect its economic interests in the region”.¹⁰

Hugo Chávez won the election with 55.07% of the vote to 44.31% for Henrique Capriles. The full results were as follows:

Candidate	Party	Votes	%
Hugo Chávez	Great Patriotic Pole	8,191,132	55.07
Henrique Capriles Radonski	Democratic Unity Roundtable	6,591,304	44.31

⁶ [Miami Herald 5 September 2012](#)

⁷ “Factbox: What does Henrique Capriles want for Venezuela?”, *Reuters*, 1 April 2012

⁸ [What’s next Venezuela? 1 October 2012](#)

⁹ Visiting senior lecturer in international studies at Duke University and former US ambassador to Venezuela.

¹⁰ [Political Unrest in Venezuela: Contingency Planning Memorandum No. 16](#)”, *Council on Foreign Relations*

Reina Sequera	Workers' Power	70,567	0.47
Luis Reyes	Authentic Renewal Organisation	8,214	0.05
María Bolívar	United Democratic Party for Peace	7,378	0.04
Orlando Chirinos	Party for Socialism and Liberty	4,144	0.02
Valid votes	14,872,739	98.11%	
Invalid/blank votes	287,550	1.89%	
Total	15,162,228	100%	
Registered voters	18,854,935	80.48%	

Source: [National Electoral Commission](#)

There was considerable speculation as to whether Hugo Chávez would survive the elections, let alone serve another term, as he had been absent from Venezuela for long periods in 2012, undergoing medical treatment in Cuba for an unspecified cancer. He had no clear successor in the event of incapacity or death, although many commentators pointed to recent high level appointments in his Government, such as Diosdado Cabello as President (Speaker) of the National Assembly and Henry Rangel Silva as Defence Minister. The Foreign Minister, Nicolás Maduro, and even Chávez's two daughters were regarded as potential successors.

Chávez was due to be sworn in on 10 January 2013, but was not able to return from medical treatment in Cuba for the inauguration. The Venezuelan Supreme Court ruled on 9 January 2013 that a formal inauguration of President Chávez's new term was not necessary. This paved the way for Vice President Nicolás Maduro to take over in the interim.

Hugo Chávez died on 5 March 2013, ending 14 years as President of Venezuela.

The [Venezuelan Constitution](#) (Articles 233) provides for the vice president to assume power in the event of the president's 'permanent unavailability'. Thus, Vice President Nicolas Maduro assumed presidential powers and duties until presidential elections are held on 14 April 2013. The opposition argued that under the Constitution the Speaker of the National Assembly, Diosdado Cabello, should have taken over as acting president.

1.4 Conspiracy theories

Events surrounding the 2002 coup

Hugo Chávez was briefly forced out of office by the military in April 2002. He thought the United States may have been involved in the coup.¹¹ In 2004 declassified CIA documents were reported to show that the CIA knew that dissident military officers and opposition

¹¹ See [interview with CNN, 4 May 2002](#) and attached April 2002 [Guardian/Observer report](#).

result of poisoning by his enemies abroad (the US). President Chávez himself had first raised concerns about this after being diagnosed with cancer in 2011.¹⁸

2 Democracy and human rights in Venezuela

2.1 Elections and referendums

Critics of the Chávez regime have been sceptical about election results which returned him to power on several occasions.¹⁹

Popular protests continued after Chávez's return to power following the 2002 coup and led to a referendum on whether he should remain President in August 2004. Former US President, Jimmy Carter, and the head of the Organization of American States (OAS), who led observer teams at the poll, said the voting appeared clean.²⁰ A majority decided to let him remain in office for the rest of his term. Chávez won another term in elections in December 2006.

Congressional elections in September 2010 resulted in Chávez's PSUV losing its two-thirds parliamentary majority, which in theory gave the opposition the power to delay or prevent legislation from being adopted. However, the outgoing Congress granted him decree powers via an 'enabling law' for 18 months. Critics thought the decree power would be used to override parliamentary opponents in October 2012 ahead of the presidential elections. However, there is no evidence that this happened.

2.2 Human rights

In 2008 the human rights organisation, Human Rights Watch (HRW), published an account of worsening human and political rights under Hugo Chávez.²¹ The report documented government practices that amounted in its view to abuses of power, including blacklisting, attacks on the freedom of the press, violation of organised labour laws, a lack of division of powers, court-packing, violations of international treaties on human rights, and increasing political intolerance against opponents. By the time of Chávez's second full term in office, [HRW stated on 5 March 2013](#), "the concentration of power and erosion of human rights protections had given the government free rein to intimidate, censor, and prosecute Venezuelans who criticized the president or thwarted his political agenda".

In its [2012 annual report](#) Amnesty International drew attention to the treatment of human rights defenders, weak accountability mechanisms, violence against women, and overcrowding, violence and death in Venezuelan prisons. Amnesty's specific concerns were outlined as follows:

Human rights defenders

Human rights defenders were threatened and subjected to unfounded accusations by government officials and the state media. Human rights organizations were concerned that the lack of definition of "political rights" in the Law for the Defence of Political Sovereignty and National Self Determination, passed by the National Assembly in December 2010, could

¹⁸ See, for example, [Reuters 12 March 2013](#), [The Week 13 March 2013](#) and [The Telegraph 18 March 2013](#)

¹⁹ See, for example, Steve Rendall, in "The Repeatedly Re-Elected Autocrat: Painting Chávez as a 'would-be dictator'", FAIR, November/December 2006

²⁰ "Observer teams endorse Venezuela vote results: Chavez survives recall bid; opposition blames fraud", MSNBC.com 16 August 2004

²¹ [A Decade Under Chávez: Political Intolerance and Lost Opportunities for Advancing Human Rights in Venezuela](#), 18 September 2008.

impede their work. The Law bans organizations considered to work for the defence of political rights from receiving international funding.

Police and security forces

There were continuing reports of human rights violations by the police, including unlawful killings and torture. Most of these abuses were not properly investigated and little, if any, judicial action was taken.

Repression of dissent

Politically motivated charges continued to be used against government critics.

Independence of the judiciary

There were continuing concerns about the independence and impartiality of the judiciary.

Prison conditions

Violence remained endemic in the chronically overcrowded prisons. In June, clashes between rival gangs in El Rodeo prison led to the deaths of some 27 prisoners.

In July, the Minister of Prison Services announced plans to release 40 per cent of the prison population to ease overcrowding. In November, she publicly threatened to dismiss judges who blocked her plans to speed up the trials of prisoners charged with minor offences. The Venezuelan Observatory of Prisons reported that in 2010 only a quarter of the prison population had been sentenced; the rest were on trial, awaiting a preliminary hearing or under investigation.

Freedom of expression

There were further restrictions on freedom of expression. In October, the National Telecommunications Commission, the state media regulator, imposed a large fine on Globovisión for violating the Law on Social Accountability in Radio, Television and Electronic Media. The television station was accused of “justifying crime” and promoting “hatred for political reasons” for its coverage of the prison riot at El Rodeo. Globovisión, whose journalists have previously been threatened and attacked and which faced other administrative investigations, appealed against this latest action in November. The appeal was pending at the end of the year.

Violence against women and girls

Violence against women remained pervasive. In spite of measures taken in recent years, the authorities had yet to issue an action plan to address violence against women or regulations on implementing the 2007 Organic law on the right of women to a life free of violence.

Amnesty concluded in a [report on 30 January 2013](#) that “the Venezuelan prison system is in crisis”.

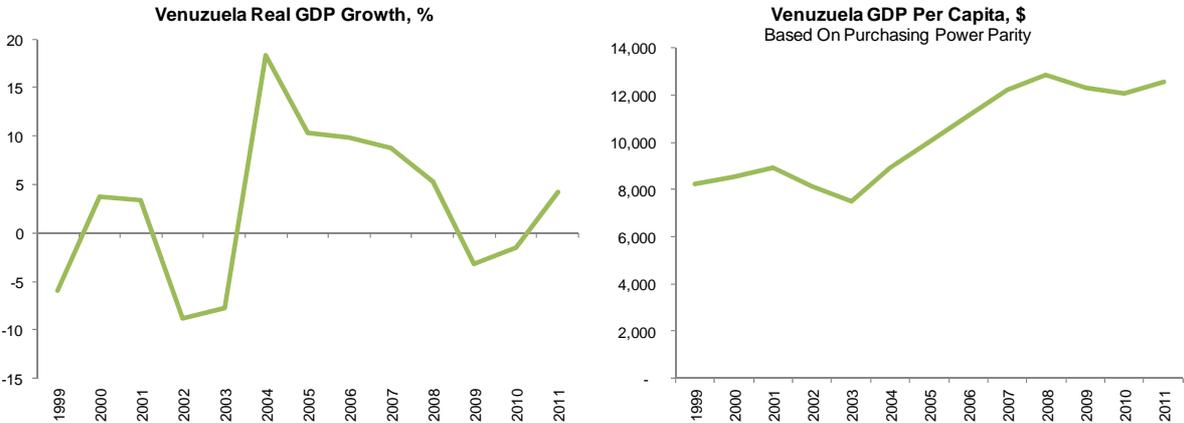
3 The economy

Under the leadership of Hugo Chávez the Venezuelan economy underwent a period of significant growth, whilst poverty and inequality fell. The role of government increased

considerably, financed by a dramatic rise in the price of oil, the backbone of the Venezuelan economy. However, despite a substantial windfall provided by higher oil prices, the Venezuelan economy at the end of Chávez’s rule was structurally weak. Inflation remained high throughout his time in office, the Venezuelan bolívar underwent numerous devaluations, Government intervention caused output in key areas of the economy to slump and, consequently, shortages of basic goods and services were the norm.

3.1 Growth & Development

The Venezuelan economy grew by 47.0% in real terms over the period 1999-2011, with GDP per capita rising from \$8,223 in 1999 to 12,568 in 2011 (current PPP-adjusted international dollars). Economic performance in the early stages of Chávez’s rule was, however, poor. Real GDP growth averaged -5.1% per annum over the five years 1999-2003, a deterioration from the lacklustre 1.6% average expansion witnessed over the prior five-year period (1994-1998). Chávez therefore inherited a weak economy which deteriorated further under the initial phase of his Presidency.



Source: IMF

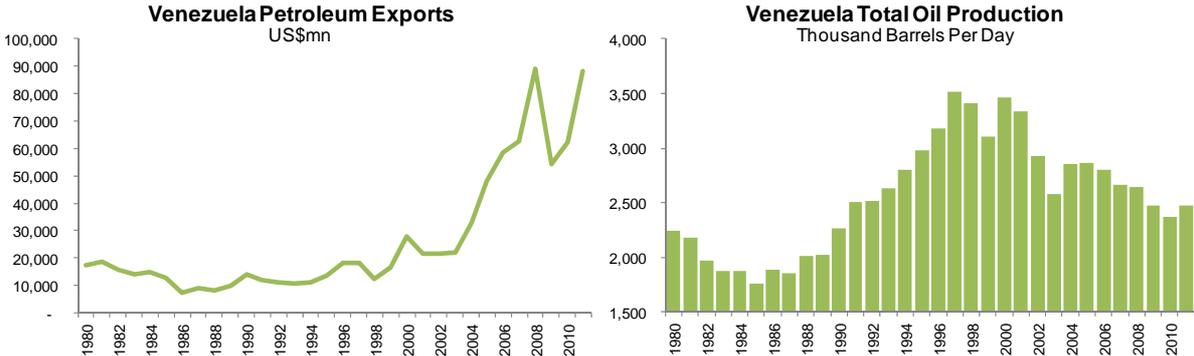
The Venezuelan economy had experienced a banking crisis in 1994, which resulted in nineteen financial institutions either closing or being taken over by the Government – equivalent to over half of the financial system.²² The Government’s budget deficit hit 11.2% of GDP that year, inflation averaged 60% and the bolívar underwent a sharp devaluation. Structural reforms were introduced in 1996 aimed at strengthening the financial system, returning it to private ownership and improving economic stability.²³ The IMF approved financial support to the Venezuelan government in July 1996 in order to support the economic reform programme, with “the centerpiece of the adjustment effort [being] a major reduction in the underlying public sector deficit”.²⁴

Upon assuming power in 1999 Hugo Chávez did not depart radically from the economic policies of the prior government, introducing spending cuts, a value-added tax and increasing public pay by less than the rate of inflation.²⁵ Economic growth of 3.7% and 3.4% was

²² R De Krivoy (2003) *Case Study The Venezuelan Banking Crisis Epilogue*, Toronto International Leadership Centre For Financial Sector Supervision.
²³ A Garcia-Herrero (1997) *Banking Crises In Latin America In The 1990s, Lessons From Argentina, Paraguay and Venezuela*, IMF.
²⁴ IMF (1997) *IMF Approves Stand-By Credit for Venezuela*.
²⁵ The Economist (June 3rd 1999) *The Chavez Enigma*.

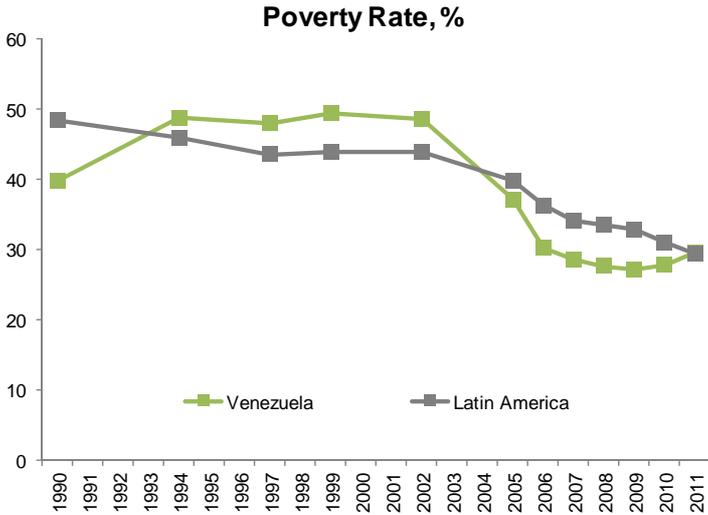
achieved in 2000 and 2001, helped by a doubling in the price of oil which resulted from tighter OPEC production quotas (a move which Chávez had pushed for).

However, political unrest in 2002, which included strikes and a military coup, severely undermined the Venezuelan economy, which shrank by 8.9% in real terms over the course of the year. The state oil monopoly, *Petróleos de Venezuela S.A. (PDVSA)*, was crippled by a two-month strike beginning in December 2002, with output falling from around 3.2m barrels per day to under 40,000. To break the strike the Government sacked approximately half of the company’s 40,000 employees.²⁶



Source: OPEC

Following this disruption, Venezuelan oil production never fully recovered under Chávez. After slumping 25% over the period 2000-2003 (according to OPEC data), only a modest 10% rise in output was observed in 2004 with output first stagnating in 2005 and declining thereafter. Nevertheless, the oil industry, now firmly under the control of the Chávez government, provided the impetus for a rapid economic expansion through 2004-2008 – over this period real GDP growth averaged 10.5% per year. Rising oil prices (Brent crude quadrupled over this period) saw PDVSA’s revenues balloon, and with this windfall the Venezuelan Government was able to ramp-up social spending. Indeed, including spending by government-controlled entities such as PDVSA it has been estimated that real social expenditure per capita increased by 314% over the period 1998-2006.²⁷

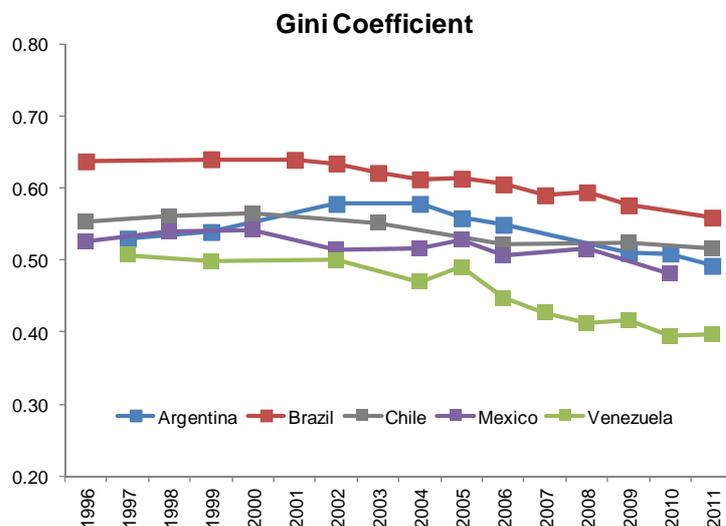


²⁶ The Economist (June 31st 2003) *Chavez’s Battle To Keep The Oil Flowing*.

²⁷ M Weisbrot (2008) *An Empty Research Agenda: The Creation of Myths About Contemporary Venezuela*, Center For Economic And Policy Research.

Source: ECLAC

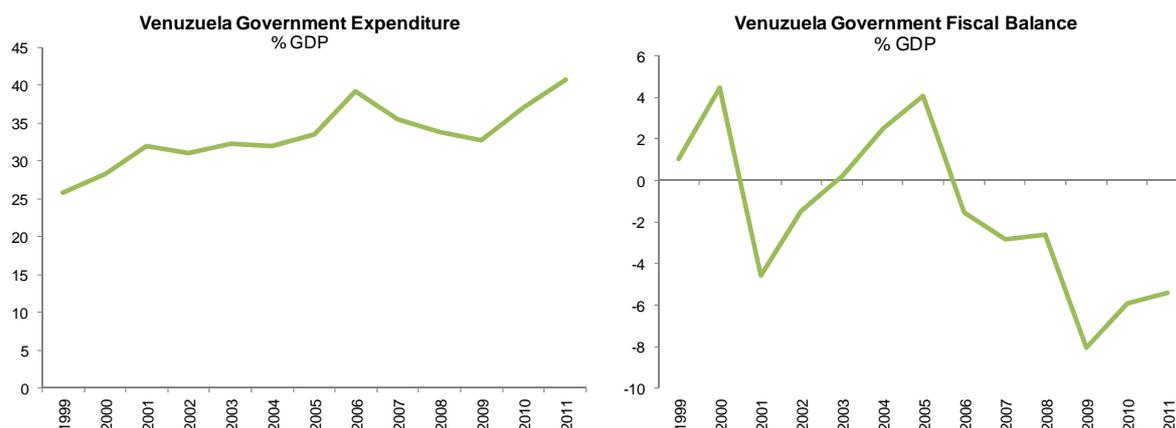
In return for heavily subsidised oil the Cuban Government provided Venezuela with thousands of doctors, nurses and teachers whilst the number of people employed by the Venezuelan Government rose rapidly (during Chávez's period in power the number of public sector works doubled to 2.4m). Social spending saw poverty fall sharply and inequality moderate. According to data from the United Nations Economic Commission For Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), in 1999, when Chávez came to power, 49.4% of people in Venezuela lived in poverty – above the average for Latin America (43.8%). By 2011 this figure had fallen to 29.5% – in line with the wider region. Other measures of development also improved, such as infant mortality rate which fell from 19.6 per 1,000 births in 1999 to 12.9 per 1,000 births in 2011. In 2000 Venezuela had scored below the World average in the UN's Human Development Index, whereas in 2012 it scored 0.748 (high development) – above the World average of 0.694.



Source: ECLAC

Inequality also fell according to ECLAC data. The Gini coefficient (a measure of income inequality, ranging from zero to one, for which higher readings indicate higher inequality) fell from 0.50 in 1999 to 0.40 in 2011. Whether inequality did fall during Chávez's period in power has, however, been questioned.²⁸

²⁸ See F Rodriguez (2008) *How Not To Defend The Revolution: Mark Weisbrot and the Misinterpretation of Venezuelan Evidence*, Wesleyan Economic Working Papers.



Source: IMF

The performance of the Venezuelan economy in the latter stages of Chávez’s rule was less robust than over 2004-2008. The global financial crisis saw oil prices, and thereby Venezuelan oil revenues, slump. The economy contracted by 3.2% in real terms in 2009 whilst the fiscal deficit hit 8.0% of GDP. In order to bolster the Government’s budgetary position, a 50% devaluation of the bolívar versus the US dollar was announced on 8 January 2010 – increasing size of PDVSA’s oil revenues (generated in US dollars) relative to the Government’s bolívar-based expenditures (the official reason for the devaluation was to improve Venezuela’s competitiveness).²⁹ The 2010 devaluation sparked panic buying and the Venezuelan economy contracted for a second year, with real GDP falling by 1.5%.³⁰ Economic growth turned positive in 2011 as oil prices returned, and remained, above US\$100/bbl. However, the pace of expansion was well below that witnessed through 2004-2008 at an estimated 4.2%. Social spending and food subsidies were aggressively increased prior to the October 2012 Presidential election, culminating in a further 32% devaluation of the bolívar against the US dollar in February 2013.³¹

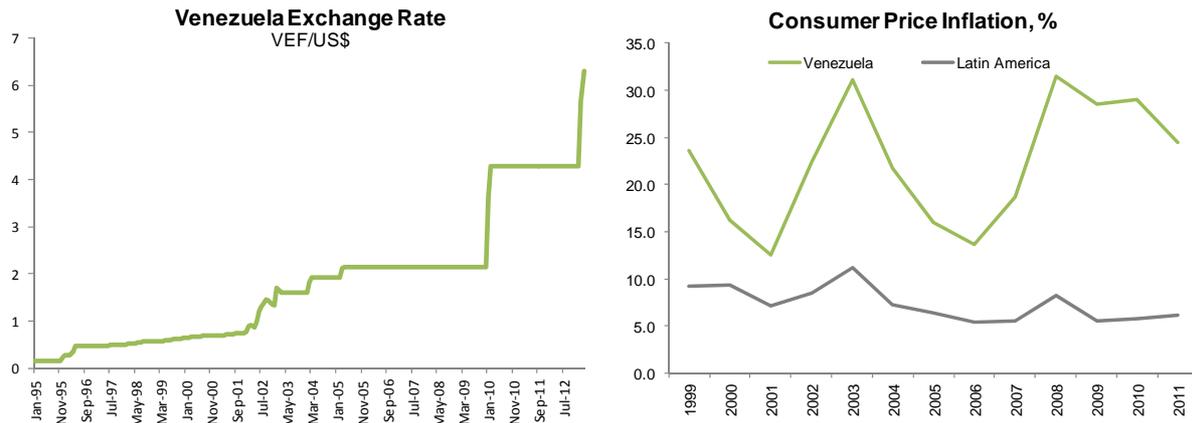
3.2 Inflation, Exchange Controls and Shortages

High inflation had been a problem in the Venezuelan economy prior to Chávez’s period in power – over the five years 1994-1998 consumer prices rose by an average of 61.3% per annum. This was also the case across Latin America, where consumer price inflation averaged 165.9% per annum over the same period. However, over the subsequent period inflation ceased to be a major problem across Latin America whilst remaining a problem in Venezuela. Over the course of Chávez’s rein the bolívar fell by approximately 90% against the US dollar.

²⁹ The Economist (January 14th 2010) [The Weakening of the “Strong bolívar”](#).

³⁰ Reuters (January 9th 2010) [Nervous Venezuelans Panic Buy TVs After Devaluation](#).

³¹ The Economist (February 11th 2013) [The not-so-strong bolívar](#).



Source: US Federal Reserve, ECLAC

Capital flight resulting from the political instability of Chávez’s first few years in power, combined with a decline in oil prices through 2001, contributed to a 56% decline in the value of the bolívar versus the US dollar over the three years 2001-2003. This slump in the bolívar saw consumer price inflation average 31.1% in 2003. In response to the bolívar’s decline the Government introduced strict exchange controls in 2003, limiting the amount of foreign currency Venezuelan residents could buy at the official exchange rate (a black market consequently developed, where the currency traded at a deep discount to its official rate).

In addition to the introduction of foreign currency rationing, the Venezuelan Government drastically increased its control over the economy by implementing the nationalisation of “strategic industries” and “unproductive” land from 2005 onwards.³² Sectors undergoing nationalisation included electricity, steel, cement, tourism, telecommunications, agriculture, oil services, and food distribution.³³ In addition to the advancement of “21st Century Socialism”, nationalisations were rationalised by Chávez as a means to control price rises – “If the plunderers continue their abuses... the state will recover those businesses and hand them over to the people.”³⁴

The combination of foreign exchange controls and the nationalisation of vast swathes of the economy led to growing shortages of basic goods and services. The limited availability of foreign exchange curtailed Venezuelan’s ability purchase imports whilst output from nationalised industries failed to meet demand. For example, although the Government owned half of the country’s productive capacity in pre-cooked maize flour (a Venezuelan staple) it was able to provide only around a fifth of output under the latter stages of the Chávez presidency.³⁵ In January 2013 the Banco Central de Venezuela’s Scarcity Index hit an all-time high of 20.4% – indicating that from a standardised basket of goods tracked by the central bank, 20.4% were not available in Venezuelan shops that month (*The Economist* reported shortages of maize, cooking oil, sugar, wheat flour and coffee).

Expansionary fiscal policy, devaluation of the bolívar and widespread shortages meant that over the four years 2008-2011 Venezuelans lived under hyperinflationary conditions (as per definition of hyperinflation under US General Accepted Accounting Principles, i.e. a doubling

³² The Guardian (March 5th 2013) [Hugo Chavez: poor boy from the plains who became leftwing figurehead](#).

³³ Reuters (December 1st 2011) [FACTBOX - Venezuela's nationalizations under Chavez](#).

³⁴ The Economist (January 14th 2010) [The Weakening of the “Strong bolívar”](#).

³⁵ The Economist (February 9th 2013) [Out of Stock](#).

of prices within three years). Inflation over 2008-2011 averaged 28.4%, well in excess of 6.4% average consumer price inflation experienced across the whole of Latin America.

3.3 Business Environment

By the end of Chávez's period in power, Venezuela was judged by the World Bank as having one of the least hospitable business environments in the World. In the Bank's 2013 Doing Business Report the country was ranked 180th out of 185 countries assessed for the ease of doing business. As the table below illustrates, Venezuela was the only country outside Africa to be placed in the bottom ten in the Bank's rankings.

World Bank 2013 Doing Business Rankings, Bottom Ten Countries

Country	Ease of Doing Business	Starting a Business	Getting Electricity	Getting Credit	Protecting Investors	Paying Taxes	Trading Across Borders	Resolving Insolvency
Niger	176	167	118	129	158	151	176	130
Côte d'Ivoire	177	176	153	129	158	159	163	76
Guinea	178	158	88	154	177	183	133	141
Guinea-Bissau	179	148	182	129	139	146	116	185
Venezuela, RB	180	152	160	159	181	185	166	163
Congo, Dem. Rep.	181	149	140	176	158	171	170	168
Eritrea	182	183	93	180	117	146	165	185
Congo, Rep.	183	180	170	104	158	182	181	136
Chad	184	181	149	104	158	184	180	185
Central African Republic	185	170	173	104	139	181	182	185

Source: World Bank 2013 Doing Business Report

Within the subcomponents of the World Bank's 2013 Doing Business Rankings Venezuela was particularly weak in the areas of "Paying Taxes" (due to the high frequency at which payments are required and considerable time involved in making payments) and "Protecting Investors" – reflecting the Government's expropriation of investors' assets (under Chávez the Government reportedly nationalised the assets of over 1,000 companies).³⁶

Venezuela's restrictive foreign exchange controls contributed to the country's low ranking in "Trading Across Borders" whilst its 160th position in "Getting Electricity" points to the electricity crisis of Chávez's final years in power. Growing demand, low tariffs, insufficient investment and adverse weather resulted in repeated blackouts and power rationing from 2009 onwards – in 2009 Chávez urged Venezuelans to stop singing in the shower in order to preserve generation capacity (around 70% of the country's electricity capacity is hydroelectric, which had been undermined by drought).³⁷

An additional challenge facing the Venezuelan economy at the end of Chávez's period in power was pervasive corruption, as evidenced by the country's lowly position in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index 2012. As the accompanying table illustrates, Venezuela is the only Latin American country to be placed in the bottom twenty (i.e. perceived to be most corrupt) countries ranked by Transparency International.

³⁶ Bloomberg 15 March 2013 [Post-Chavez Venezuela as Chilly for Cos. From P&G to Coke.](#)

³⁷ *The Financial Times* 22 February 2013) [Venezuela: power cuts stir resentment](#)

Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index 2012

Country	Region	Score*	Ranking
Angola	Sub-Saharan Africa	22	157
Cambodia	Southeast Asia	22	157
Tajikistan	Central Asia	22	157
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Sub-Saharan Africa	21	160
Laos	Southeast Asia	21	160
Libya	North Africa	21	160
Equatorial Guinea	Sub-Saharan Africa	20	163
Zimbabwe	Sub-Saharan Africa	20	163
Burundi	Sub-Saharan Africa	19	165
Chad	Sub-Saharan Africa	19	165
Haiti	Caribbean	19	165
Venezuela	Latin America	19	165
Iraq	Middle East	18	169
Turkmenistan	Central Asia	17	170
Uzbekistan	Central Asia	17	170
Myanmar	Southeast Asia	15	172
Sudan	North Africa	13	173
Afghanistan	South Asia	8	174
Korea (North)	East Asia	8	174
Somalia	Sub-Saharan Africa	8	174

*perceived level of public sector corruption on a scale of 0 - 100, where 0 means that a country is perceived as highly corrupt and 100 means it is perceived as very clean.

Source: Transparency International

Foreign investment into Venezuela during Chávez's rule reflected the relatively weak business environment detailed above. Over the ten years 2002-2011 foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows into Venezuela averaged just 1.8% of GDP. This represents a marked decline from the 5.5% of GDP FDI inflow that occurred in 1998, the year prior to Chávez assuming the presidency, and the 3.7% average inflow observed over the five years 1994-1998. Low foreign investment, output shortages in nationalised industries, and dramatically increased government expenditure financed by high oil prices meant that by the end of Chávez's presidency the Venezuelan economy was arguably more dependent than ever on oil.³⁸

4 Foreign relations

4.1 Regional relations

Hugo Chávez promoted a South-South dialogue and established close relations with like-minded leaders across Latin America, including Fidel Castro of Cuba ("Venezuela has been fundamental in helping Cuba to deal with the US blockade"),³⁹ the Bolivian President, Evo Morales, and leaders in Nicaragua and Ecuador. He also formed alliances with premiers who opposed the US, such as Iran, North Korea and Libya under Colonel Gaddafi.

Colombia shares a 1,300-mile border with Venezuela. The former Colombian President, Alvaro Uribe, was opposed to President Chávez and the Bolivarian revolution. Uribe accused Chávez of hosting Colombian rebels, while Chávez accused Colombia of hosting the US military and conspiring to attack Venezuela. In November 2009 tensions increased along

³⁸ *The Financial Times* 15 July 2012 [Venezuela more prone to oil price jitters](#).

³⁹ *Guardian*, 16 September 2012

Colombia's border with Venezuela, fuelling reports of an imminent war. Chávez ordered 15,000 troops to take up positions along the border with Colombia and Colombia created a new army division to guard a strategic stretch of the border. Uribe maintained there were guerrilla camps in Venezuelan border areas, but that he did not have the time for military intervention.

When Juan Manuel Santos took over the Colombian presidency in August 2010, and with UN mediation, relations improved with Venezuela and there was a marked recovery in bilateral trade. In November 2011 Santos and Chávez signed thirteen new bilateral agreements, including a new customs regime.

The Colombian Marxist guerrilla group, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) has been holding peace talks with the Colombian government, hosted latterly by Cuba, but in January 2013 the FARC announced the end of a two-month unilateral ceasefire after the Colombian Government refused to extend the truce. The other main guerrilla group, the National Liberation Army (ELN), has also sought a seat at the diplomatic table. On the death of Hugo Chávez, Santos said that peace with the FARC would be a fitting tribute to the Venezuelan leader.

4.2 Russia and China

Chávez found an ally in Vladimir Putin, who visited Venezuela as Prime Minister of Russia on 2 April 2010 to discuss oil, defence and nuclear energy cooperation. According to reports the two countries launched a \$20 billion venture between Russian firms and the Venezuelan state oil company, PDVSA, aimed at pumping 450,000 barrels a day from the Orinoco heavy oil belt. Russia also delivered the last four of 38 military transport helicopters. No new defence agreements were signed, although Chávez maintained Moscow was willing to help Venezuela develop nuclear energy for generating electricity. He denied that he was building an alliance against the US, but said he would continue to make "modest" arms purchases from Moscow that were the minimum needed for Venezuela's defence.⁴⁰

Venezuela also bought training and light attack jets from China for defence and anti-drugs flights. According to the Venezuelan Government, the jets were to be used to train pilots and intercept drug traffickers who used Venezuela as a stop-off point to take Colombian cocaine to the US, Europe and Africa. The US Administration accused Venezuela of starting an arms race in South America.

4.3 UK-Venezuelan relations

The [FCO country profile](#) of 15 June 2012 stated that "Venezuela and the UK have strong historical links" which "date back principally to British involvement in Venezuela's independence struggle and support for both Francisco de Miranda and Simon Bolivar, the 'Liberator', both of whom spent time in London"; also, the "British Legion played an important role in the military campaign, especially in the battle of Carabobo". An informal bilateral action plan was signed in June 2007, setting out a framework for cooperation in trade and investment, drugs and organised crime, security reform, energy, health, agriculture, human rights, education and culture, the environment and climate change. In October 2008 a bilateral agreement on counter narcotics was signed. The FCO Chevening scholarship programme has provided funding for Venezuelan students to do postgraduate studies in the UK and since the 1980s over 300 scholarships have been awarded.

⁴⁰ [New York Times 2 April 2010](#)

On the death of President Chávez the Foreign Secretary, William Hague, was “saddened”, stating that “As president of Venezuela for 14 years he has left a lasting impression on the country and more widely”.⁴¹ The UK Ambassador to Venezuela, Catherine Nettleton, said: “President Chavez was passionate about his country and his passing will be widely felt in Venezuela” and that the UK would “continue to work with the Venezuelan government to build our cooperation in areas of mutual interest”.

4.4 US-Venezuelan relations

When Chávez was first elected in 1998, US-Venezuelan relations were cordial and Hugo Chávez went to Washington to meet the then President, Bill Clinton. However, relations between the two countries deteriorated and have been tense for many years. The [Venezuela Solidarity Campaign](#) became concerned about increasing US militarisation of the region and the threat this posed to stabilisation. The background to this lies mainly in the US support for anti-narcotics and anti-guerrilla actions in neighbouring Colombia.

In addition to accusing Washington of being behind the 2002 coup attempt, Chávez accused the US of military interference in the region and of planning to attack Venezuela for its oil reserves. Chávez objected to the US-led war in Iraq and demonstrated his opposition by selling oil to Cuba, resisting US plans to stop drug-trafficking in Colombia and helping guerrilla forces in other Latin American countries. He threatened to stop supplying oil to the US, but donated heating oil to help the US victims of Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

Chávez cultivated relationships with Cuba, Iran, Libya and Syria. In February-March 2011 US officials were reported to have discussed with the Chávez Government concerns that Venezuela may be breaching international sanctions against Iran over its nuclear programme, which Western powers feared was not a civil but a weapons building programme. The US closely scrutinised Venezuela and Iran after the two major oil producers signed 11 deals in Tehran in October 2010 which focused on energy cooperation.

On 24 May 2011 the US State Department announced the imposition of unilateral sanctions against seven international companies,⁴² including *Petroleos de Venezuela, S.A.* (PDVSA). The sanctions were intended to put pressure on Iran to halt its nuclear programme by penalising those companies that traded with Iran.⁴³ The US maintained that PDVSA was in breach of US legislation because between December 2010 and March 2011 it exported \$50 million worth of fuel additive – reformate - to Iran.⁴⁴ The sanctions against PDVSA prohibit it from competing for US Government procurement contracts, from securing financing from the US Export-Import Bank and from obtaining US export licenses. However, according to the US State Department, “PDVSA can continue to export crude to its US refinery operations in the US, including CITGO” and the sanctions do not apply to subsidiaries of PDVSA.⁴⁵ In June 2011 the outgoing US Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs (WHA), Arturo Valenzuela, told the OAS that the sanctions against PDVSA were not intended to punish Venezuela but Iran, and were in compliance with United Nations resolutions.⁴⁶

⁴¹ [BBC News 6 March 2013](#)

⁴² See attached State Department factsheet

⁴³ For further information on US sanctions against Iran, see [State Department website](#)

⁴⁴ [Venezuelanalysis 25 May 2011](#). Reformate is a blending component that improves fuel quality.

⁴⁵ Ibid

⁴⁶ [El Universal 8 June 2011](#)

The Venezuelan Foreign Ministry called the sanctions a “hostile action on the fringes of international law that violates the principles of the Charter of the United Nations”. It would assess the situation, which it described as “imperial aggression”, and consider the effects of the sanctions on the operational capacity of the oil industry and “therefore, the supply of 1.2 million barrels of oil per day to the US”.⁴⁷

The Venezuelan Parliament issued a declaration rejecting the sanctions and warning the US to cease hostilities or risk losing its oil supply from Venezuela. The anti-Chávez opposition coalition expressed approval of the US sanctions. Venezuela was supported by other members of the [Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of our America](#) (ALBA), which issued a statement rejecting the “imperialist sanctions of the US government” against the PDVSA and demanded an end to aggression against Venezuela.⁴⁸ The Venezuelan Ambassador to the OAS, Roy Chaderton, believed the US sanctions were “the beginning of a plan designed to disrupt the elections in Venezuela in 2012”.⁴⁹

Chávez congratulated US President Barack Obama on his election victory in November 2008, but condemned western military action in Libya in 2011 in which Chávez’s ally, Colonel Gaddafi, died. In 2012 the US and Venezuela began informal talks on improving bilateral relations, but these stalled, and on 5 March (the day President Chávez died), Venezuela expelled two US diplomats for allegedly trying to recruit Venezuelan military personnel to conduct destabilising acts. In response, the US expelled two Venezuelan diplomats a few days later.

Following the death of Hugo Chávez, the US Administration issued a statement saying:

At this challenging time of President Hugo Chavez's passing, the United States reaffirms its support for the Venezuelan people and its interest in developing a constructive relationship with the Venezuelan government.

As Venezuela begins a new chapter in its history, the United States remains committed to policies that promote democratic principles, the rule of law, and respect for human rights.

Former US President Jimmy Carter released a statement saying Hugo Chávez would “be remembered for his bold assertion of autonomy and independence for Latin American governments”.⁵⁰

5 Prospects for the post-Chávez era

The post-Chávez era looks uncertain and potentially volatile. The International Crisis Group published an [alert](#) on 7 March 2013, which stated: “The death of President Hugo Chávez casts a shadow over a polarised Venezuela whose immediate political stability cannot be taken for granted”. The alert continued:

Crisis Group welcomes the vice president’s call for “no violence or hatred”. Government and opposition share responsibility for avoiding bloodshed by insisting their followers neither provoke violence nor allow themselves to be provoked. Maduro has a special duty to ensure armed government supporters

⁴⁷ Venezuelan Embassy in Washington DC, Statement: Venezuela Rejects U.S. Sanctions Against PDVSA, 24 May 2011

⁴⁸ Venezuelan [Foreign Ministry statement](#), 26 May 2011

⁴⁹ [EI Universal](#) 7 June 2011

⁵⁰ [BBC News](#) 6 March 2013

comply. He has announced deployment of security forces in the big cities to ensure calm; this should be done without discriminating between sides. The 125,000-strong government militia, a politicised branch of the armed forces, should be kept off the streets.

Venezuela cannot afford an extra-legal political confrontation with a real risk of violence. Elections should be free, fair and held in conditions allowing equal competition. In the polarised environment, the government that emerges will need to surmount severe challenges if it is to restore and protect the independence of rule-of-law institutions and cope with serious crime and economic and social difficulties. This should be a goal shared by those who treasure President Chávez's legacy and those who opposed him.

The international community – in particular Venezuela's neighbours and other regional partners – should press for a peaceful transition and signal clearly they will not condone unconstitutional acts.

In recent years violence, armed robbery and kidnapping have made Venezuela a highly dangerous country, with 45.1 murders per 100,000 people.⁵¹ The rumours surrounding Chávez's illness and his absence from Venezuela, the "jostling for position among his possible successors [created] conditions in which crime and violence are flourishing and likely to do so through 2013".⁵² *InSightCrime* speculated that chaos in Venezuela could spread into the border areas with Colombia:

The likely chaos will not only have repercussions for Venezuela, but also the neighboring Colombia. Colombian rebel groups are estimated to have up to 1,000 fighters in Venezuela, as well as many of their top leaders and a large percentage of their logistics support. While cooperation between Venezuela and Colombia has improved since president Juan Manuel Santos took office in August 2010, the current lack of leadership, and clear orders to the military, has put the Venezuelan Armed Forces into a holding pattern along the frontier, where corrupt elements continue to feed the Marxist rebels of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN) with weapons, munitions and medical supplies. There are also strong indications that elements of the military are facilitating, if not actively taking part in drug trafficking on the frontier.

5.1 The April 2013 election

Predictions of chaos and violence have with a few exceptions not materialised, and aggression has been largely verbal rather than physical, with "deeply personal attacks and accusations of dirty tricks by both sides".⁵³ Nicolás Maduro invoked the ancient 'curse of Macarapana' to fall on the heads of those who do not vote for him in the election. Venezuelan Government officials allege that the opposition has used "mercenaries" to create chaos in the run-up to the elections. Political rallies supporting both the main candidates have turned violent, but not on the scale feared by some commentators, while some reports accuse the police of firing tear gas on peaceful anti-government protesters.⁵⁴

⁵¹ According to the latest UN Development Program report, only Honduras, El Salvador, Ivory Coast and Jamaica had worse rates than Venezuela.

⁵² *InSightCrime* 8 January 2013. This is a Washington-based organisation which looks at organised crime in Latin America and the Caribbean.

⁵³ *Reuters* 7 April 2013

⁵⁴ E.g. *Reuters* 21 March 2013

The main candidates

The short run-up to elections in April 2013 has been fraught. Nicolás Maduro (PSUV) faces the opposition coalition leader, Henrique Capriles, but it will not be a re-run of the October 2012 election because of the absence of the 'Chávez factor'. The official campaign period began on 2 April 2013 and ends on 11 April, although both Maduro and Capriles started their campaigns early.

Two opinion polls published in the week after Chávez's death gave Maduro a lead of more than 14 percentage points. Polls in the week before the election gave him a lead of 10-20 points over his rival.⁵⁵ An Institute for Data Analysis (Ivad) poll published on the [Venezuelan Embassy](#) in London website in early April 2013 gave Nicolás Maduro a 23 point lead over Capriles. Many analysts think it will be virtually impossible for Henrique Capriles to win the election, given Maduro's superior campaign resources, the popularity of the Chávez welfare programmes and the number of Chavistas in most state institutions.⁵⁶

Campaign platforms

On 23 March 2013 the *Observatorio Electoral Venezolano*, a Venezuelan NGO that will observe the election, criticised the election campaign for its lack of substance:

Few ideas are being heard regarding how the difficult task of governance will be assumed over the coming years. Instead, we hear degrading insults of various types that deteriorate the national political climate...an aggressive discourse that obviously does not help political differences, which in any normal electoral debate would be handled through arguments in a pacific manner.

[Venezuelanalysis.com](#), 8 April also noted the lack of "principled discussion of concrete issues" and the negative campaigning.

Maduro declared his candidacy in March. He made tackling crime a priority, pledging to go on foot, unarmed, into the toughest Caracas slums and ask the gangs to lay down their arms. Maduro declared that he aimed to consolidate Chávez's project, pledging to continue expanding the Government's social programmes, and also to invest in housing, infrastructure and agricultural production.

In early April Maduro launched a new government initiative, the Movement for Peace and Life, to work with communities and state bodies and lower the violent crime rate, and the creation of a special body to investigate and fight corruption.⁵⁷

Capriles has attacked Maduro for not being Chávez, and has emphasised basic problems "from potholes and crime to power cuts and corruption" and "violent crime and shortages of products to rising prices and shoddy roads".⁵⁸ Capriles said the allegations of plots against the former President were no more than "smokescreens" to distract Venezuelans from the real issues. He has pledged to reconstruct the economy and gradually roll back the socialist economic measures, currency controls and nationalisations. He wants "to install a Brazilian-style administration of free-market economics with strong social welfare policies".⁵⁹

⁵⁵ [Venezuelanalysis.com](#) 8 April 2013

⁵⁶ [Reuters](#) 20 March 2013

⁵⁷ [AVN \(English\)](#) 8 April 2013

⁵⁸ [Reuters](#) 20 March 2013

⁵⁹ [Reuters](#) 7 April 2013

5.2 The role of the military

The role of the military remains uncertain. The majority of the estimated 113,000 members of the Venezuelan Armed Forces traditionally supported Chávez, although there have been recent reports that senior officers will respect the Constitution and a Capriles victory in the election. Venezuela's weak democratic institutions are no guarantee against military ambition or civil unrest. The *Economist* suggested that the most visible threat to Maduro and to stability in Venezuela could come from Diosdado Cabello, the president of the legislature and a former army lieutenant, with "powerful friends among the generals":

Their differences correspond, in part at least, to one of the fault lines running through the revolution, between a radical, civilian left and a more pragmatic military arm. Over time, they seem bound to split the movement, which hitherto depended for its survival on Mr Chávez's charismatic personality.

5.3 The future of the Bolivarian revolution?

Most commentators expect Maduro to benefit from the wave of grief and loyalty following President Chávez's death and to win the election. However, the political divide and impending economic problems may make the transition to a post-Chávez Venezuela difficult. There remains in Venezuela a deep divide between the poor and the middle and upper classes, a polarisation that could become volatile under pressure. Chávez's constant warnings about enemies within and outside the country have left large parts of the population worried. Some commentators have concluded that the legacy of Chávez's Bolivarian revolution is "more limited than he would have liked",⁶⁰ suggesting the time may have come for a dramatic change in Venezuelan politics.

An [Economist report](#) on 5 March 2013 thought the Bolivarian revolution now faces its greatest test: "Without doubt, chavismo will outlive its founder. Many ordinary Venezuelans will look back on his rule with fondness. But his heirs will have to grapple with some intractable problems". The report considered some of the serious economic and political problems facing the country:

After a pre-election spending binge last year, the economy is slowing again. Faced with shortages of many goods, including hard currency, Mr Maduro devalued the currency by 32% in February. Venezuela comes towards the bottom of just about every league table for good governance or economic competitiveness. For 14 years Venezuelans have been told that their problems were caused by somebody else—the United States or "the oligarchy". Getting ahead has depended on political loyalty rather than merit. The mass enrolment of millions in "universities" that mainly impart propaganda have raised expectations that are almost bound to be dashed.

Assuming the PSUV wins the election, it will be ill-equipped to grapple with these problems. None of its leaders has the authority of Mr Chávez, nor his skill at communicating with the masses. While affable, Mr Maduro is a yes-man lacking political weight, according to a former Latin American foreign minister who dealt with him. Diosdado Cabello, the speaker of the National Assembly and an army colleague of Mr Chávez, has declared his support for Mr Maduro, but has ambitions of his own. Perhaps only the Cuban leadership can preserve unity among the chavistas. The stakes are high. Cuba's president, Raúl Castro, knows that the loss of Venezuelan oil would plunge his country's economy deeper into penury.

⁶⁰ [New York Times](#), 7 March 2013

An [Economist report on 6 March 2013](#) pointed to disunity even among *Chavistas*:

Despite their public show of unity, the factions within the “Bolivarian revolution” have different interests and ideologies. But they share the short-term goal of fending off an electoral challenge from an opposition that won 44% of the presidential vote last year.

6 Further reading

[The Economist 5 March 2013](#), “Venezuela after Chávez: Now for the reckoning”

[BBC News Obituary](#) 8 March 2013

[BBC News Venezuela country profile](#), 12 June 2012, and [Timeline](#), 1 August 2012

US Congressional Research Service, [Venezuela: Political Conditions and U.S. Policy](#), Mark P. Sullivan, 28 July 2009

[CIA World Factbook profile of Venezuela](#), 26 March 2013

[Profile: Hugo Chavez](#) *BBC News* 5 December 2002

[Chávez’s effect: social impact of Bolivarian revolution](#), 7 November 2011, Maria Luisa Giordano