# Hugo Chavez and the Bolivarian Revolution

There was a wide gap between the poor and wealthy people in Venezuela before the entry of Hugo Chavez in the nation’s politics beginning from 1980. The state of poverty was depressing and serious from 1980 to 1998 with the country experiencing poor urban areas that consisted large populations and poor economic structures (Gott 143). On approximate, sixty-five percent of the country’s population lived in extreme poverty and did not receive any medical care or any assistance from the government. The then government did not take care of the economy thus making it depressing. Low-income families and other citizens that were under deprived never received any form of government help which was considered as one of the reasons for the increased crime rates and riots in the country (Zúquete 94). Moreover, the government lacked the ability to provide finance forms or any financial aid to its citizens as it showed plenty corruption which led to the poor and unattractive economy.

The country’s gross domestic product per capita was approximately four thousand dollars, with the unemployment rate between 1980 and 2001 being about 14.5 percent with about 24 percent of the country’s households living in extreme poverty (Corrales and Penfold-Becerra, n.p.). Additionally, the inflation rate between the above periods never assisted the citizens at all as the consumer prices were approximately 24 percent. This meant that consumers were not capable of purchasing or being able to obtain any commodities as a result of the economic lifestyle and prices they were forced to endure. In conjunction with the poor economy in Venezuela, the crime rates and other unauthorized activities that occurred were increasing at an alarming rate since 1976 till the ascending of Chavez into power. Hugo Chavez’s dream was to change the lifestyle of his nation as well as ensure complete economic and political reforms upon his election into the presidency (Buxton et al., 1470). Besides, he demanded equity and the enacting of new social reforms for his countrymen as this would ensure his support from his people as well as voters.

Since Venezuela has one of the largest oil reserves globally, after the re-election of President Perez on February 1988, Venezuela’s export economy heavily depended on high international prices of oil (Gott 165). However, the 1980’s oil prices decline led to the government’s strong strain in public spending. This led to the crushing of the economy thus resulting in an increase in the economic gap in the state and the military. With several corruption suspicions in the government led by President Perez, there were two attempts of coup d’état that were led by Hugo Chavez. These coup d’états helped Chavez build his political career. Firstly, they helped in the exposing of the corruption, failures and the weaknesses of Perez and his incumbent government. Secondly, the coups figured an image to the Venezuelans of a dynamic, charismatic and popular leader in Chavez (Zúquete 101).

Hugo Chavez ascended to power in 1998 and showed himself to many people as their savior since he has revolutionalized the country completely and to a certain extent has been successful on the establishment of a competitive economic and political regime (Zúquete 110). Upon his presidency start, Chavez created a new constitution for Venezuela changing the state’s name to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. The state has ever since had a total alteration as there was a change of its socialism change due to the nationalization of the private businesses and the oil company. Revenues from the oil industry were used to be invested in the social programs that helped the country’s poor population (Frias 57). However, Chavez also seized several properties from the middle and upper class and transferring them to the ownership of the country as well as creating animosity with other countries which defied them in several ways. Despite these acts being harmful to the rich Venezuelans, they were of benefit to the poor (Frias 61). As a result, Chavez gained praise from the poor who, however, considered him as a hero whereas the wealthy Venezuelans and other critics in other nations despised him as a villain.

The Bolivarian Revolution was named after socialist Simon Bolivar was had been a prominent and critical figure in Venezuela’s history. The revolution refers to the social movement and political process is meant to build and implement a mass democracy which would enable and allow the country to be independent economically, having an equal distribution of revenues and ending of the political corruption in the state (Corrales & Penfold-Becerra n.p.). Since the changing of the constitution, the country has relied on the Bolivarian revolution which has helped the country’s foreign policy due to the suffering of the oil production the country. The total income from the oil industry in the country was under the control of foreign companies and was not reinvested into the country thus making it a loss to the state ((Zúquete 121). Chavez created the Venezuelan Oil Corporation which ensured the foreign corporations that extracted oil paid more to the country. Other countries that had endorsed the same foreign policy have a vigorous development record across the globe.

Chavez’s first commitment was, however, the fight for the poor and oppressed as demonstrated by several statistics. Millions of people have been uplifted from poverty and awarded new opportunities that have would improve their lives (Buxton et al., 1472). For example, the government provided a free educational program that enabled each citizen to access education which has been one of the successful missions. The economic and political environment in the Venezuelan state has been revolutionized by Chavez and his Bolivarian revolution creating a serene environment for all the citizens. However, his death has been seen as an end to the revolution that has seen great achievements in the change of the country’s economy.

In summary, the Bolivarian Revolution is seen as one of the greatest revolutions in the 21st century which are also compared to the Arab Spring (Gott 193). However, the president Nicolás Maduro who took the interim control after Chavez’s death promised to take up the five key priorities that were set out by his predecessor if he was to be elected. These priorities are; economic development, Plan de la Patria 2013-2019, multipolarity, Bolivarian socialism, national independence, and environmentalism. Chavez thus had shown the qualities of a true leader who had the servant leadership in himself with the interest of the people he represented at heart (Zúquete 121). Despite the few critics regarding his leadership, he truly transformed Venezuela as he remains as one of the celebrated icons of the country.

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