



Language

The Caracas revolt, el *Caracazo*, in February 1989 has been called the beginning of the world revolt against neoliberal globalization. The popular protest against austerity measures – including raising the prices of public transport – met with indiscriminate violence from the security forces. Three years later, Hugo Chavez came to national prominence as commander of a military coup, which failed before he could call for a popular civilian uprising, and he was imprisoned. However, in 1998, he won the presidential elections as the apparent representative of the social forces that had continued to build up since el *Caracazo*. On assuming power, he reformed the constitution, declaring Venezuela a 'Bolivarian republic', became the object of international controversy, yet won Venezuelan elections, dying in office in 2013.

In April 2002, the right-wing opposition to Chavez saw massive protests at the state petrol company PDSVA and a one-day general strike as an opportunity to destabilise the government and create conditions for a coup d'état. On 11 April, they made their move, detaining Chavez himself and declaring a new government – which was recognised with indecent haste by the USA and Spain. However, within 47 hours it had fallen – defeated by a mixture of popular protest and the military intervention of the Presidential Guard, loyal to Chavez. The dispute at the PDSVA continued, however, leading to lock-out later in the year and further strikes and protests, egged on by the private media.

Chavez was a controversial populist, who polarized opinion. His anti-US paranoia extended in June 2007 to denouncing Gene Sharp's influence on student protests, and his publicists have joined in the debate on US 'democracy assistance' to accuse ex-Otpor activists and Robert Helvey of using workshops on nonviolent action to promote US interests. (See Section F.)

El Libertario, 'the journal of autonomous social movements' in Venezuela, offers English-language commentary on its web page: <http://www.nodo50.org/ellibertario/english.html> [1], including some commenting on the 2002 coup and anti-coup – such as Rafael Uzcategul, '[Venezuela today: Complexities and outright lies](#)' [2].

Cannon, Barry, [Coup or popular rebellion? The myth of a united Venezuela](#) [3], Bulletin of Latin American Research, Vol. 23, issue 3 (July), 2004, pp. 286-302

Carroll, Rory, [Comandante: Inside Hugo Chavez's Venezuela](#) [4], London, Canongate, 2013, pp. 320

Gott, Richard, [Hugo Chavez and his Bolivarian Revolution](#) [5], London, Verso, 2005, pp. 315

Analysis sympathetic to Chavez, includes a section on the popular uprising following the 2002 coup.

Uzcategui, Rafael, [Venezuela: Revolution as Spectacle](#) [6], Tucson AZ, See Sharp Press, 2010, pp. 219

A critique of Chavismo from the libertarian left.

Wilpert, Gregory, [Changing Venezuela: The History and Policies of the Chavez Government](#) [7], New York, Verso, 2007, pp. 352

Supportive yet critical account of Chavez's first term by founder of venezuelanalysis.com [8].



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See also:

Michael McCaughan, [The Battle of Venezuela](#) [9], (A. 4.a. Civil Resistance to Military Coups [10])

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