“You could call it a territory”: Democrats remain complicit in Trump’s recolonization of Venezuela after the midterms

Andrea Lobo
11 November 2026

In his first interview after the Republican defeat in the November 3 midterm elections, broadcast Sunday on CBS’s *60 Minutes*, Donald Trump listed Venezuela among his victories. “We’ve won Venezuela and taken out billions and billions and billions of dollars already,” he said. “And we will be taking out many billions of dollars.” Asked about the country’s status, he replied: “You could call it a territory, you could call it whatever you want. We won that war in less than one hour.”

Following the largest repudiation in an election of an incumbent in half a century, Trump remains emboldened knowing that he faces no real opposition from the Democratic Party against his illegal policies in Venezuela.

The Chavista government of Acting President Delcy Rodríguez spent the following days proving him right. On Monday, Rodríguez presided over the signing of a memorandum of understanding for the return of US-based oil giant ExxonMobil, which left Venezuela in 2007 after Hugo Chávez nationalized the last privately operated oilfields. On Tuesday, the National Assembly ended the state monopoly over electricity established by Chávez, opening generation, transmission and distribution to private and foreign companies.

The previous Friday, Rodríguez and US Chargé d’Affaires John Barrett re-inaugurated the George Washington Plaza in Caracas, where schoolchildren waved US flags. Barrett called Washington “a leader much like Bolívar” and said the two figures “symbolize new friendship.” The affair summed up the class dynamics of the current situation.

Simón Bolívar, the Venezuelan-born general who led the wars of independence against Spain in the early nineteenth century, is today celebrated as the “Liberator” of Latin America. But Marx, in his 1858 article “Bolívar y Ponte,” exposed the class role behind that myth. Bolívar was a representative of the criolla landed bourgeoisie, the “creole nobility” of Caracas, who freed the continent from the decaying Spanish empire only to deliver it into the hands of rising British and, later, American capital. Marx dismissed him as a cowardly, treacherous figure. Enlisting Bolívar to bless the recolonization of a Latin American country is therefore entirely consistent with his actual legacy.

Washington, on the other hand, was the first American President who led the War of Independence against Britain and embodies the revolutionary legacy of 1776. Marx and Engels regarded the First American Revolution as the great opening of the modern bourgeois-democratic era—the revolution that, as Marx put it, “sounded the tocsin” for the European revolutions that followed.

Washington led an armed struggle against colonial rule, and the American Revolution remains, in the words of the WSWS, “the most progressive event in world history in its time.” Today all factions of the American ruling class now invoke Washington’s name to sanctify the very colonial domination he fought against.

Much of the commentary on the midterms holds that a Democratic Congress will rein in these abuses. The Atlantic Council announced that “Venezuela oil deals and military operations will come under scrutiny” when the new majority takes office in January.

The record shows the opposite. The conversion of Venezuela into a semi-colony, which Trump openly calls a “territory,” is the product of a bipartisan policy.

The Democrats object to the handling of the spoils, not to the conquest or the overall “Donroe Doctrine” asserting unchallenged US domination over the Western Hemisphere. Opposition to the recolonization of Venezuela can come only from the working class, in Venezuela and in the United States, independently of both parties of Wall Street and the Pentagon.

In March 2025, as Nicolás Maduro’s vice president, Rodríguez accused ExxonMobil of spending “more than a decade conspiring against Venezuela” to steal its resources. On Monday she called the memorandum “a very important signing” covering fields with “billions of barrels of reserves.”

ExxonMobil, whose CEO called the country “uninvestable” in January, set its terms: any investment would require “stable policies, clear regulations, strong investment protections and competitive returns.” A US court ordered Venezuela last year to pay the company more than $985 million for the expropriations of 2007.

The electricity law answers months of protests against

© World Socialist Web Site

blackouts of up to 12 hours a day with privatization. Private companies may receive state assets in concessions of up to 25 years. Tariffs will be set in foreign currency, and consumers face fines of $50 to $10,000 for unauthorized use.

Rodríguez has told protesters that “burning tires does not add a single megawatt to the electric grid.” On October 29, she ordered state assets declared “non-essential” to be “offered to the private sector or returned to their former owners.”

This comes on top of the August agreement that handed North American Blue Energy Partners 100-year rights over 17 oilfields holding some 65 billion barrels. The Pentagon’s Office of Strategic Capital holds a 35 percent stake, so that the US military is now a direct owner of Venezuelan oil.

The pseudo-leftist *CounterPunch* greets Lula’s reelection in Brazil as “consolidation interruptus” for the right shift across the region and recalls the “Pink Tide” era as the “international epicenter of independence from Washington.” Yet Chavismo, the flagship of that Pink Tide, is the force now administering a “territory” on Washington’s behalf.

A bipartisan Monroe Doctrine

The legal foundations of the whole operation are in fact rotten. In a September 30 op-ed, *The Hill* described “a ticking constitutional time-bomb.” Under Executive Order 14373, signed January 9, Trump declared a national emergency and ordered the Treasury to hold Venezuelan oil revenues “in a custodial and governmental capacity,” with disbursements decided by Secretary of State Marco Rubio. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent has refused to tell Congress where the money is, how much there is or who receives it. Asked whether the accounts held only oil proceeds, he answered: “It is many Venezuelan assets.”

Summarizing the extent of the opposition of the Democrats, the magazine concluded: “The problem here isn’t Venezuela. It is Trump.”

On September 30, the ranking Democrats on four Senate committees, Jeanne Shaheen, Jack Reed, Elizabeth Warren and Martin Heinrich, wrote to Rubio, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth and Energy Secretary Chris Wright about the oil deal. They complained that it was “unlikely to reduce high energy costs for Americans,” that it “creates new corruption risks” and that the statute governing the Pentagon office “does not explicitly provide authority to take equity stakes in private oil companies.” The letter says nothing about the January 3 bombing of Caracas, the abduction of a head of state, the Constitution or Venezuelan sovereignty. Its six demands are requests for documents.

When it came to the war itself, the Democrats delivered nothing. On January 8, five days after the attack, the Senate advanced a war powers resolution 52-47. It failed on January 14. Senator John Fetterman voted to advance it while declaring that “the arrest of Maduro was a positive development for Venezuela and its people.”

On Tuesday, the House killed the impeachment of Hegseth, by voting 211-204 to refer it to committee. The resolution was forced to the floor not by the Democrats but by Republican Thomas Massie. Among its eight articles were the “kidnapping of a sovereign foreign leader” and “extrajudicial killings” in the strikes on alleged drug boats in the Caribbean and the Eastern Pacific, which have killed at least 243 people. Democratic leaders did not whip the vote, and 11 Democrats, including Nancy Pelosi, did not vote. Their votes would have been enough to defeat the referral.

The Democrats’ passivity is not a matter of timidity. The policy that led to January 3 is theirs as much as Trump’s. In March 2015, Barack Obama issued an executive order declaring Venezuela an “unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States,” the legal basis for the sanctions that followed. Trump’s first administration imposed financial sanctions and an oil embargo that devastated the economy. Joe Biden kept recognizing the “interim government” of Juan Guaidó, the self-proclaimed president that had launched a coup attempt in 2019, until the opposition itself dissolved it in December 2022. Biden reimposed oil sanctions in April 2024 and, in January 2025, raised the reward for Maduro’s capture to $25 million. Trump doubled it that August and then captured the prisoner by force.

Among the millions of American workers who voted against Trump on November 3, a major motivating factor was opposition to the endless neocolonial wars. If there is any change at all, the Democrats will merely seek greater “oversight” in Venezuela that leaves the occupation, the Pentagon’s oil stake and the boat strikes in place. Venezuelan workers, meanwhile, face blackouts, a minimum wage frozen at a few cents and the plundering of their resources and infrastructure.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site