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Trump's Illegal Regime Change Operation Will Kill More Venezuelans

If Russia, China, and North Korea decided to recognize Nancy Pelosi as the president of the United States, would Americans go along with that? I mean, the ones who don't like Trump, think he is a real threat to the country, or even not a legitimately elected president? I don't think so. But Trump, his secretary of state, Mike Pompeo, and National Security Adviser John Bolton all think that the United States should be able to choose a new president for Venezuela. So does “ouster in chief” — as The New York Times recently described him — Senator Marco Rubio. And this sordid bunch has just recruited an experienced war criminal from the 1980s, Elliott Abrams, to help make their dream come true.

How could this go wrong? Well, we do have some twenty-first century experience with US-sponsored “regime change,” and it has ranged from murderous to horrific. Iraq, Syria, Libya, Honduras — all have led to a lot of killing and suffering, mostly of civilians, including children. Many of the migrants fleeing Honduras in the caravans that Trump has recently demonized and manipulated politically were escaping from misery caused by the 2009 US-backed military coup in that country. Not to mention the much larger wave of migrants upending European politics, most of them escaping from the mess that the US government created with its regime change wars in the Middle East.

We can put aside the fanciful notion that the Trump regime change operation in Venezuela has something to do with promoting democracy. Trump is still good buddies with MBS in Saudi Arabia — that's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, or “Mister Bone Saw,” as

he was called after his underlings killed and chopped up a Washington Post journalist and US resident. And the murderous Rodrigo Duterte in the Philippines, who has killed thousands in his own country; or Juan Orlando Hernández of Honduras, who stole his reelection last year in broad daylight. And so on.

But President Nicolás Maduro has to go, they say. So Juan Guaidó, a little-known Venezuelan congressman, anointed himself after a phone call from Mike Pence the night before.

What do the Trump administration and its allies want in Venezuela, besides the world's largest oil reserves for American oil companies? Mostly they want power in the region, where just a few years ago left governments who were quite friendly with Venezuela presided over the majority of the region. The US "national security state" lost a lot of influence in Latin America during the first decade or so of the twenty-first century, and now they are taking it back.

To be sure, a large majority of Venezuelans want a new government, and there are good reasons that they would. The economy has shrunk by a record 50 percent in the last five years, and inflation is over a million percent annually. It's a record-breaking depression combined with hyperinflation, and it's mostly the fault of the current government.

But the US has imposed harsh sanctions to make that depression worse and make it nearly impossible to fix the hyperinflation. These sanctions, which are illegal under international and probably US law, have killed many Venezuelans by worsening the scarcities of life-saving medicines.

New sanctions announced this week will take billions of dollars more of revenue and assets from the government, severely deepening the depression. More Venezuelans will die, and others will flee the country, exacerbating the Venezuelan refugee crisis.

A worse scenario may unfold if the regime change operation pushes Venezuela, which is still a politically polarized country, into civil war.

Isn't it time we stopped trying to choose other people's governments and focused on trying to clean up our own mess at home?

This column originally appeared in the [Sacramento Bee](#).