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Venezuela

# Nobel Peace Prize: Beyond the Dismay...

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**The awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to María Corina Machado (MCM) sparked an unusual debate on social media. However, the arguments for and against are more driven by emotion than by reason. Is it possible to approach Venezuelan reality solely in a Manichean way, from the perspective of polarization?**

Clearly, understanding the implications of awarding this prize requires an analysis to fully grasp the stakes of its political motivations. This is the only way to highlight the driving forces acting in concert with the military, media, and mass data-gathering offensive conducted in the Caribbean in recent months. We call for moving beyond simplistic, binary interpretations of political propaganda and geopolitical frameworks that reflect the power dynamics that led to the awarding of the 2025 Nobel Peace Prize.

Of course, our position unequivocally rejects any attempt at military intervention or intelligence work by the United States (CIA) in Venezuela. What we wish to emphasize in this article is the need to build an anti-imperialism from the working class, an anti-imperialism that transcends the deceptive rhetoric of the left, which, under the guise of a geopolitical vision, ignores the material living conditions of the working class and the restrictions imposed on political freedoms by the current regime.

## **The Nobel Peace Prize: an eternal strategy of capitalist soft power?**

Historically, the United States, while developing its strategy of economic and military domination, also implements mechanisms of control and cultural hegemony. Soft power (the title of a book by Joseph Nye, 1990) refers to the North American capacity to subtly influence geopolitical power dynamics through social behaviour by fostering ideological adherence through discourse or an approach that prioritizes persuasion over force and direct coercion; in other words, enabling the dominated to appropriate the position of the dominant themselves.

In this sense, the Nobel Prize has historically served several functions: first, to co-opt leaders and align them with consensus-building strategies—liberal, neoliberal, or illiberal—while distancing all discourse and actions from any positioning related to class struggle. The rhetoric of national reconciliation often plays a central role in this. Second, to neutralize anti-imperialist projects, portraying them as radical, uncivilized, and out of step with the present, to the point of equating the concepts of sovereignty and freedom with an unprecedented threat to US national security. The goal is to socially isolate movements that challenge private property and the power of capital. Third, to reinforce Western cultural hegemony, that of the Northern powers. Fourth, to use humanitarian morality as an ideological weapon—from a Gramscian perspective—to justify actions involving the disproportionate use of force. Fifth, to establish the dominance of global financial capital in the landscape, presenting market stabilization as a hallmark of lasting peace. This can be easily verified by examining the circumstances surrounding the awarding of several of these prizes in Norway.

In 1983 (Lech Walesa) and 1989 (Mikhail Gorbachev), the Nobel Prize served as a mechanism to accelerate and legitimize the Soviet bloc's transition to capitalism, protecting the leadership that effectively guaranteed it. After the dismantling of the USSR, Poland was integrated into NATO, thus consolidating the eastern border of the Atlantic bloc. Gorbachev's rhetoric of openness and transparency provided the framework for the transition to capitalism in the Soviet republics.

This rhetoric, legitimized by the Nobel Prize, facilitated the imposition of market peace, guaranteeing Russia's entry

into the processes of global capital reproduction, to the point of becoming a driving force for the potential creation of a Group of Three (G3) within the context of the reconfiguration of international power relations following the world wars. The war in Ukraine and drone provocations against once-inviolable European nations are part of this new world order that is struggling to emerge and consolidate. The Nobel Prizes awarded to Walesa and Gorbachev contributed to building global capitalist hegemony and consolidating North American imperial power, following a gradual downward trajectory. Once their objectives were achieved, the laureates faded into the background.

In 1991, the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to Aung San Suu Kyi (Myanmar) amidst the highly publicized context of Burma's democratic transition, presented by the West as an example of peaceful resistance—that is, the ability to prevent the loss of capital control in the face of a popular uprising. Aung San Suu Kyi's rise to power marked the triumph of political and economic neoliberalism over progressive Asian national models. Indeed, from the moment she took office, she aligned herself with Western capital, liberalizing strategic sectors while repressing ethnic minorities such as the Rohingya. Consequently, the prize became the mechanism by which the internal bourgeois bloc was able to consolidate itself, thus opening the country to international energy companies and Western multinationals after decades of "isolation" from the circuits of the global market and transnational capital.

Years later, after the PLO's evident dismantling had begun, the Oslo Accords between Israel and Palestine were signed, their legitimacy confirmed by the 1994 Nobel Peace Prize, awarded jointly to Shimon Peres, Yitzhak Rabin, and Yasser Arafat. These accords, which created a "Palestinian Authority," obscured the anti-imperialist nature of the Palestinian cause, subordinating the national liberation struggle to an administration dependent on international aid. The rise of Hamas, contrary to this logic, was a predictable consequence, furthering Israel's strategic plan to crush the Palestinian people, drive them into the occupied territories, and ultimately lead to the current genocide in Gaza. The path to this genocide was paved by the Nobel Peace Prize's legitimization of the Oslo Accords. The 1994 Nobel Prize marked the staging of the post-Cold War neoliberal consensus in Palestine.

Barack Obama received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2009, just months after becoming President of the United States, in recognition of his efforts to re-legitimize his country's leadership following the disasters in Iraq and the evidence of torture at Guantanamo. The Obama administration consolidated the new model of hybrid warfare with the use of drones for military purposes (Somalia, Yemen, Pakistan), the invasion and destruction of Libya (2011), and the bombings in Syria and Iraq under the pretext of attacking the Islamic State. The promotion of soft coups like the 2009 coup in Honduras (Zelaya), the expansion of military bases in Africa (AFRICOM) and the Middle East, the coup in Egypt (against Mohamed Morsi), the coup in Ukraine (Euromaidan, 2014), and attempts to reorganize the imperial system after the 2008 financial crisis. Awarding the Nobel Peace Prize to Obama became a symbolic act, aimed at presenting North American hegemonic neocolonial leadership as ethical, not based on imperial coercion. This is what the Trump administration tried to do in 2025, unsuccessfully, because the geopolitical manipulation surrounding Venezuela was far more astute. The Norwegian jury did not make its decision because of disagreements between Europe and the Trump administration, as has been portrayed, because Europe is already submissive enough to allow itself such a gesture of rebellion, but because Venezuela is a priority in the current context of imperialist reorganization.

In 2016, the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to Juan Manuel Santos, former Minister of Defence under Álvaro Uribe Vélez, responsible for the "democratic security" policy and the expansion of US military bases on Colombian soil. As Minister of Defence, he led the rescue operation of Ingrid Betancourt and 15 others, as well as the massacre of 17 FARC guerrillas in Ecuador, during which Raúl Reyes was killed (Operation Phoenix, 2008). As president (2010-2018), he led Operation Sodom (2010), which resulted in the death of Commander Jojoy (Víctor Julio Suárez), and Operation Odiseo (2011), during which Alfonso Cano, then a high-ranking FARC leader, was killed. His military actions of extermination paved the way, through military means, for the possibility of political negotiations. Therefore, the 2016 Nobel laureate's objective was to confer international legitimacy on the peace agreement with the FARC-EP, which, as we have emphasized, had been preceded by assassination operations against the group's leaders. In doing so, the United States ensured the implementation of a peace narrative that masked the clauses of

an agreement that diminished the possibility of radical change, particularly regarding the dominance of the Colombian bourgeoisie and its colonial relationship with the North Americans. While the peace process formally mitigated the manifestations of internal warfare, it did not alter the economic structure of wealth accumulation by a small sector, nor did it break the oligarchic control of the territory that had fuelled the armed uprisings of previous decades. The "peace", legitimized by the Nobel Prize, was the necessary condition to attract foreign direct investment, particularly in the mining, hydrocarbon and agri-food sectors, thus consolidating the neoliberal model in this country.

This "geopolitical" trajectory was confirmed in 2019 when the prize was awarded to Ethiopian President Abiy Ahmed for the peace agreement with Eritrea and the democratic opening he spearheaded. This prize brought an end to the cycle of American interventions that led to the overthrow of the leftist DERG regime (Ethiopian Provisional Military Government, 1974-1991) and the period of instability caused by the military offensive of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), which overthrew Mengistu Haile Mariam. In reality, this prize served to re-legitimize the Ethiopian government, which aligned itself with the US and IMF strategy for the Horn of Africa. The Abiy administration (2018– ) has pursued the privatization of state-owned enterprises (telecommunications, airlines, energy, transport, logistics, and ports), pushing for market-friendly reforms to integrate Ethiopia into the logic of global finance (megaprojects such as the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam), while simultaneously intervening to avert the risk of radical change. The Abiy government has shifted towards neoliberalism (opening foreign banks, establishing a stock exchange), launching macroeconomic reforms with the help of international loans (IMF and others), opening up the exchange rate to the public and introducing flexibility into the economy, and dispossessing communities through land accumulation by displacing the urban poor due to land-use change. Following the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize, the Tigray War (2020) revealed that the peace achieved was in reality a mechanism for reorganizing state power that favoured elites associated with transnational capital and Washington's interests. Control of the Red Sea (the ports of Djibouti and Eritrea) and the containment of Chinese commercial expansion, when you read between the lines, unveil the real reasons for awarding this prize.

In 2025, it was awarded to María Corina Machado, which is not really a surprise given the intended purpose. To explain who the recipient of this prize is, I will summarize the article I wrote with Leonardo Bracamonte in 2024, entitled "Venezuela: Who is María Corina Machado?"

## María Corina Machado: beyond illiberalism

María Corina Machado is a militant of political illiberalism and the fascist far right, harbouring hatred for anything resembling the political left. A descendant of European colonizers, she clearly embodies the global rise of the far right. This is not to deny or obscure the extent of her leadership, based on the rallying of a significant portion of the Venezuelan right to the status quo, the catastrophic errors of the Maduro regime, and her ability to embrace the three major popular aspirations of the moment: decent wages (the current monthly minimum wage is less than one dollar) in line with the regional average, the return of migrants for family reunification, and freedom of opinion and association for the vast majority who live by their labour. However, an examination of her 2023 government programme reveals that these slogans, when they touch upon the interests of capital, are diluted or emptied of their substance. Her leadership, therefore, rests on a clear ideological foundation. This is a real leadership. Denying it helps neither political analysis nor building alternatives, even though, as Fernando Mires says, "MCM was the leader of a multi-social and multi-ideological national movement, which today has transformed into a pro-Trump movement... which, far from accumulating forces, has rather reduced them" (X network, 13/10/2025).

Over the past two years, Machado has established herself as the undisputed leader of a significant portion of the Venezuelan opposition. During the opposition primaries for the July 28, 2024 presidential election, she garnered overwhelming support (93 per cent ) from voters. This was before her disqualification by the Maduro government,

which prevented her from running for president. She then led the campaign of Edmundo González Urrutia, the opposition's "lead candidate" for the June 28, 2024 elections.

For the first time in 25 years, a right-wing candidate has garnered significant support, not only from traditional opposition groups but also from popular and left-wing sectors, weary of Maduro's authoritarianism and the elimination of democratic processes for choosing political representatives. Machado embodies not only opposition—to both Chavism and Maduroism—but also a bourgeois political project aligned with transnational capital, of geopolitical significance, seeking to exert institutional and state leadership as soon as conditions allow.

María Corina Machado is clearly rooted in the traditional Venezuelan bourgeoisie. Her family history stretches back a long way: to Electricidad de Caracas and other economic and financial empires. She has cultivated a public image based on merit, individual effort, entrepreneurial values, and a model family, which contrasts sharply with what is known as clientelism, networks of favouritism, and state corruption, all of which are considered essential to the Venezuelan rentier system.

Her leadership is not based on strongly institutionalized party structures, but rather on fragile social organizations, civil society groups, and a high degree of personalization—a kind of "caudillismo." During the Chavist and Maduro years, Machado was a recurring figure in the opposition, often adopting insurrectionary positions (attempts to overthrow the government, denunciation of the dictatorship, etc.). One of the defining episodes was her participation in the 2004 recall referendum with the organization Súmate; it appears that Súmate received funding from US entities, and Machado was accused of conspiracy, though no legal action was taken.

As early as 2002, during the coup against Chávez, Machado signed the "National Salvation Decree" on behalf of civil society. This episode illustrates her early involvement in attempts to overthrow the institutions of the Chavist regime.

Her opposition is based on class principles: indeed, her governing programme (2023-2024), entitled "Venezuela: Land of Grace. Freedom, Democracy, and Prosperity," proposes a transition to a smaller state, a market economy, private property, a reduction of the bureaucratic apparatus, meritocracy, a liberal justice system, and guarantees for national and international private investment. She proposes a "national agreement" to turn the page on Maduro-Bolivarism in order to revise the Venezuelan social pact enshrined in the 1999 Constitution. One of the axes that she proposes is federalism, understood as the decentralization of power, the distribution of resources to the regions, the creation of spaces for regional capitalist accumulation and the overcoming of the "imbalance of state control" in order to build new power relations based on capital.

In the article we co-authored with Bracamonte (2024), we highlight the six pillars of her government programme, presented in 2023, each accompanied by short-, medium-, and long-term measures. Among the political foundations of coexistence, she advocates the independence of powers, checks and balances, bureaucratic simplification, the professionalization of the civil service, the restoration of institutional balance, the legitimization of the legislative and judicial branches, and the restoration of legal guarantees.

Regarding the restructuring of the state, she emphasizes the need to reduce the size of the state in accordance with the neoliberal model, to reorganize the federal system, to digitize administrative processes ("E-gov"), to establish a meritocratic civil service career, and to retrain public workers on a voluntary basis to the new management model.

To stabilize the economy, she proposes a stable economic and financial framework, respect for private property, the elimination of public oversight of exchange and financing regulations, fiscal adjustments, agreements with international organizations such as the IMF/World Bank, debt-for-asset swaps, the privatization of public enterprises (including the state oil company PDVSA) and essential public services.

Her economic, social and cultural development strategy includes comprehensive health plans, STEM-focused education, education vouchers, curriculum overhauls aimed at eliminating Bolivarian ideology, a social security system with private components, labour flexibility and an integration policy based on private property and the market.

She advocates "sustainable development" based on a green economy through the promotion of non-polluting energies, green businesses linked to private investment, the establishment of regulation of extractive sectors and the replacement of public debt with green initiatives.

In foreign policy, efforts are focused on the return of immigration, based on regaining the country's role in the international division of labour inherent in neoliberal globalization. Her pragmatic approach to international relations relies on the professionalization of the diplomatic corps (a new bureaucracy trained in the logic of capital) and integration into international organizations such as the OECD, which will attract foreign investment.

The opposition primary campaign gave her visibility and legitimacy. Despite her disqualification, her messages, her nationwide tour, and her optimistic rhetoric resonated more and more strongly. She cultivated an image of victimhood due to the government's underhand tactics (refusal to register, disqualifications, restrictions on her freedom of movement). This narrative strengthened her leadership. She succeeded in capturing the support not only of traditional right-wing sectors but also of broader sectors that had previously supported Maduro, including those targeted by sanctions, migrants, and working-class communities affected by the deterioration of services and the economy.

Although Machado presents an explicit neoliberal agenda, many of these ideas were not widely debated during the campaign, which facilitated the fact that her real programme remained in the shadows, or at least received little publicity. Publicly, she does not clearly address the popular demands of the working class, unions, social movements, or social rights: she focuses primarily on the legal guarantees of the market, private property, and a smaller state. Social policies appear more as promises or publicity stunts.

Machado fails to acknowledge the existence or role of the "new bourgeoisie," speaking only of corrupt individuals, as if the old bourgeoisie hadn't been built on the appropriation of oil revenues. This inability to engage in dialogue with the new bourgeoisie limits her capacity to build broad consensus within the bourgeoisie, thus hindering her stated desire to promote an orderly transition of power. Her verbal radicalism—insurrectionism, outright opposition, and an uncompromising stance toward the Maduro regime—earns her support but also creates spaces for political conflict that pose risks to institutional stability and political dialogue. This is her main Achilles' heel: she takes sides with one or the other of the conflicting bourgeois sectors, thereby obstructing any possibility of political and economic stabilization.

Machado maintains close ties with the old Venezuelan bourgeoisie (businessmen, owners of the means of production). She is also connected to foreign capital and international and diplomatic organizations. Invitations, awards, and external recognition are an integral part of her career.

In 2005, María Corina Machado and George W. Bush met publicly to unveil their shared agenda on democracy and human rights, the domestic political situation, the future of bilateral relations between the United States and Venezuela, and oil geopolitics. Twenty years later, it appears that the agreements reached during that meeting are nearing completion.

The United States and other world powers are watching her leadership with interest, albeit cautiously, as a possible transitional option. A transition led by Machado and her alliance (MCM-EGU) will have to confront the contradictions between her neoliberal agenda and popular social expectations. Its success will depend on her ability to build a broader consensus, negotiate with other factions of the bourgeoisie, including the new bourgeoisie, and manage social tensions, which seems unlikely. However, the Maduro regime's missteps in managing the domestic situation and international relations—and even within the progressive bloc composed of Boric, Lula, Petro, and the late Pepe

Mujica—have paved the way for the temptation to impose a forced transition.

María Corina Machado represents not only electoral opposition to the Maduro regime, but also a military-institutional ideological project explicitly continuing the neoliberal shift initiated by Maduroism, while incorporating the illiberal forms currently promoted by the Trump administration. The MCM programme is based on the interests of the old bourgeoisie, transnational capital, free competition, and the shrinking of the state. The MCM political practice aims to liquidate the new bourgeoisie. Its leadership rests on concrete material foundations: the social emergency faced by millions of people who have suffered the degradation of their livelihoods, the effects of sanctions, inflation, and migration under the Maduro administration (2014-2025). Machado acts as the spokesperson for this discontent, despite her programme, which aims to preserve the interests of capital, not social rights. The illusion that Machado, if she came to power, would represent a progressive or democratic solution for the popular sectors is misleading: her project presents fundamental differences with social justice initiatives and is part of a logic of bourgeois restoration to move from neoliberalism to illiberalism.

## The crisis preceding the 2025 Nobel Prize

Since 1983 Venezuela has been going through a structural crisis of the accumulation model of a rentier bourgeoisie that appeared in 1958 – based on oil, extractivism and imports – and of political representation — from which it has not been able to escape, despite the neoliberal recipes (PAC, 1988), the popular revolt (1989), the military uprisings (4F and 27N, 1992), the broad-based government (Caldera, 1994), the Chavista period (1999-2013) and that under the aegis of Maduro (2013-2025).

The onset of the national crisis coincided with the advent of neoliberal globalization, the financialization of the global economy, and the rise of technopolitics as a substitute for global ideological assumptions. This combination of local and international factors necessitated a new model of bourgeois accumulation combining local and international capital, tangible investments, and speculative financialization based on oil rents. It also necessitated a new model of partisan mediation capable of transcending Fordist assumptions and social security models, and of liberalizing relations between social classes. This implied not only the emergence of new political paradigms but also the creation of a new generation of leaders—a development that those in power could not accept without reacting. Moreover, the Venezuelan bourgeoisie, parasitic due to its rentier accumulation, lacked the experience to integrate into the internationalized, competitive market promoted by globalization, which exacerbated the crisis.

Chavism's particular effort (1999-2013) to overcome the crisis on the basis of a social agenda of wealth democratization – which never turned into an anti-capitalist revolution, but which included progressive elements – clashed with the emergence of a new bourgeoisie, with its own class interests, which, in the period 2013-2025, has slowed down and eliminated the remnants of radicalism.

Chávez's candidacy (1996-1998) called for the development of a humane capitalism, a third way, that would overcome the domination of the old bourgeoisie, not eliminate it. This is why sectors of this old bourgeoisie, represented by Miquilena and others, supported him until the 2002 coup. From then on, the Bolivarian Revolution experienced a dual situation that would mark its dramatic outcome. On the one hand, the promotion of a national, popular, and community-based project, the construction of popular power—albeit still directed and controlled by the party—with the so-called 21st-century socialism (starting in 2005); on the other hand, the emergence of a new bourgeoisie, which benefited from the old rentier model based on imports. The rise in oil prices would contribute to this dual orientation, fostering a new form of multi-classism.

The 2009-2010 financial crisis in Venezuela, which implicated key figures of Chavism who now owned banks,

demonstrated that the neo-bourgeois project was underway. Between 2009 and 2012, the persistent but growing confrontation between the two paths of the Bolivarian process (the communal path and the bourgeois path) was evident. Chávez, who aspired to the role of mediator—some claim, without any way to verify it, that his strategic bet was on the national popular movement—fell ill and eventually died, suddenly giving way to a successor (Maduro) who lacked the leadership and the internal balance of power necessary to maintain the mediating ties inherent in a multi-class mass project.

Maduro's rise to power thus inaugurated a new phase: Madurism, which relies on the supremacy of the neo-bourgeois programme and the subordination and then liquidation of the popular national community project. 21st-century socialism is reduced to a slogan, which maintains the solidarity of sectors of an international left incapable of grasping the structural crisis of Venezuelan rentier capitalism, but which, internally among the masses, becomes an obstacle to the possibility of achieving socialism. For the ordinary citizen, 21st-century socialism translates in practice into authoritarianism, the absence of political freedoms, the unprecedented deterioration of material living conditions, the fracturing of families due to the explosion of economic migration, and the loss of hope in the role of the state as guarantor of fundamental rights. The damage inflicted by Madurism on the possibilities of a socialist alternative to the Venezuelan crisis is enormous, and its consequences remain unpredictable.

Madurism is a form of government guided by the new bourgeoisie, born from the 2002 coup. In the absence of strong leadership like Chávez's, Maduro's government is building a diffuse identity based on internal power dynamics, with various leaders serving the central government. But those who fail to recognize Maduro's ability to construct his own leadership model and make it functional in maintaining power are mistaken. His weakness has been transformed into strength through what he calls a civil-military-police alliance.

The Maduro administration has experienced three key periods. The first, between 2013 and 2017, focused on eliminating the remnants of the old bourgeoisie's political representation by contact—primarily indirectly—with right-wing parties and by forcefully repressing urban uprisings instigated by this political sector, with a worrying impact on human rights (especially in 2017). Simultaneously, it succeeded in fragmenting the political right, clearly forming the "alacranes" (scorpions) camp, right-wing factions that claimed to remain in opposition to the government but, more than ever, negotiated behind the scenes with it. The segment of the old bourgeoisie that escaped—and resisted—this assimilation was represented by María Corina Machado (MCM), who had previously been a minority within the opposition electorate (2 to 5 per cent), but who began to emerge during this period as the only genuine right-wing opposition.

During this period, the Maduro government isolated leaders of the PSUV and the government who sought to support the Chavist government's agenda (Giordani, Navarro, Márquez, and others), while simultaneously distancing itself from key elements of the Chavist model of accumulation and multi-class leadership (Ramírez, Rodríguez Torres, among others). This transformed the Maduro government into an entity with its own identity, distinct from its original core, Chavism.

The second phase of the Maduro government unfolded between 2018 and 2024, a period during which he prioritized the subjugation of the left which was beginning to distance itself from his political orientation (PPT, Tupamaros, Redes, PCV, among others). The abandonment of the social agenda was justified by the implementation of unilateral coercive measures (UCM), which had a significant impact starting in 2017. While these measures significantly affected the country's income, they were insufficient to explain their devastating effect on the national programme of popular and social justice, which had been central to policy during the Chavist era. The monthly minimum wage, which serves as a retirement indicator for some five million people, plummeted, reaching unprecedented levels of nearly half a US dollar per month, while the average wage hovered between 15 and 20 dollars per month. The provision of additional bonuses—approximately \$120 per month—falls far short of offsetting widespread inflation, which has driven the price of basic goods and services to two to three times the Latin American average. Remittances from the eight million migrants help alleviate the precarious situation of those who remain in the country.



Money from the sale of assets such as houses, cars, and land belonging to the middle class and professionals is used to meet daily needs, creating a new pattern of accumulating wealth at depreciated real estate market prices.

In 2018, the Maduro government promulgated Decree 3332, which reformed the Organic Labour Law by restricting the right to strike and collective bargaining agreements. It also issued Memorandum 2792, an unprecedented blow to the labour movement, paving the way for a drastic reduction in the cost of Venezuelan labour. All of this was accompanied by legal actions against all left-wing parties and the persecution of union and social leaders, marking a significant authoritarian shift under the Maduro regime.

During this period, negotiations began with the American administration, initially secret and later public. This rapprochement aimed to rebuild relations with the American imperialist power by using oil as a bargaining chip to overcome the effects of the UCM. To this end, it sought to present itself as a government capable of fostering a meeting between the old and new bourgeoisie, restoring bourgeois order, and thus ushering in a new era of governance.

Several obstacles stand in the way of this initiative. First, the accumulation model of the new bourgeoisie has remained rentier, based on imports and extractivism—just like that of the old bourgeoisie—meaning that the constituent elements of the local capitalist structural crisis that began in 1983 have not been overcome. The United States does not wish to replicate the model of economic and trade relations with Venezuela typical of the liberal bourgeois period, but rather engages in a combination of neoliberal and illiberal relations that favours greater rent capture and the transfer of the effects of its structural crises to the capitalist periphery. Despite a public and well-known agreement between the Maduro regime and the employers' association FEDECAMARAS, a rebellious sector of the old bourgeoisie remains, favouring the total liberalization of the economy, and claiming to be represented by María Corina Machado.

Secondly, Maduro's shift has significantly eroded his social and electoral base, thus limiting his ability to play an effective mediating role within a framework of democratic freedoms. Indeed, the increase in oil revenues following the war in Ukraine marked a brutal transfer of resources to the financial bourgeoisie—a form of exchange control—as well as to accumulation processes via imports, speculation, and outright corruption (as in the case of PDVSA's cryptocurrencies), but it did not improve the material living conditions of the working class or restore wage levels.

Third, while the Biden administration appeared to follow this course of action supported by Maduro – particularly since the war in Ukraine, with Venezuela returning as a reliable source of oil supply – the Trump administration is betting on placing the Venezuelan question on the US neo-colonial repositioning agenda in the region.

Fourth, by limiting the possibility of a left-wing alternative to Maduro and co-opting a significant portion of the right (the "scorpions"), Maduro ultimately strengthened the legitimacy of the leadership of María Corina Machado, who established herself as the true representative of the opposition to Maduro. Maduro's clumsiness in attacking the left when it could have been a source of support, even allowing him to negotiate on more favourable terms, clearly demonstrates the ideological nature of the new bourgeoisie in relation to the old bourgeoisie.

For both the old and new bourgeoisie, the essential point is to foster polarization, which would eliminate any project of a popular, national, or genuinely socialist nature. The Maduro-MCM polarization benefits the Maduro regime and the United States, as it helps to ward off any possibility of a radical and genuinely anti-imperialist solution, while maintaining control over a bourgeois solution to the Venezuelan crisis.

The third phase of Madurism began with the elections of July 28, 2024. Maduro was aware that the disaster wrought by his political programme had allowed the entire opposition to his administration to rally around María Corina Machado. But this seemed less dangerous to him than the emergence of a mass bloc to his left, as this would jeopardize the interests of the new bourgeoisie he represents. It is wrong to say that the Venezuelan electorate has

shifted to the right; on the contrary, the impossibility of building an electoral bloc distinct from the polarization that appeared functional, opposing Maduro to the United States, forced large segments of the electorate opposed to the government's structural adjustment plan to vote for the only option that seemed viable and clearly opposed to the existing reality. Even part of the left was caught in the trap, an illusion quickly abandoned in the face of the American military threat against Venezuela. The electorate's distrust of other right-wing and centrist political options, largely infiltrated by the Maduro government via the political scorpions, has unfairly affected even organizations with some autonomy from the Maduro government, such as those represented by Enrique Márquez and his centrist party.

In this third phase, the Maduro government attempted to reach an agreement with the United States based on Venezuela's oil and mineral resources. The problem is that time seems to be running out, as Trump's illiberal agenda and the emergence of a new capitalist world order now demand a new role for Venezuela in this reconfiguration.

## Trump sparks a Caribbean storm

The Trump administration is working towards an imperial repositioning in the region. In this sense, Venezuela plays a central role in its strategy. Everything seems to indicate that Trump, unlike Biden – who advocated *laissez-faire* as long as the United States obtained Venezuelan oil – wants to exert territorial, political, and military control over Venezuela, in order to use it as an example of his illiberal and neo-anti-communist strategy of ideological hegemony.

To do this, he follows a clear path. First, aware that the Maduro regime is showing itself to be subservient to American interests, he accuses Maduro and his leaders of being drug traffickers – the Cartel of the Suns – seeking not to integrate, but to weaken the Venezuelan government, taking advantage of the Maduro regime's hesitations to create an even more favourable situation for the North.

Secondly, by promoting the image of a Maduro regime composed of drug traffickers—without objective evidence—it seeks to portray progressivism as degenerating into criminality and to weaken potential anti-American resistance to military intervention. The anti-invasion resistance is beginning to be presented as remnants of criminal gangs.

Third, by deploying ships, equipment, and combat troops in the Caribbean, it demonstrates its regional military supremacy, pushing for a cost-effective transition of power in Venezuela with significant regional geopolitical implications. Its primary aim is to create divisions within the Maduro regime, facilitating his internal ouster by military leaders and thus paving the way for a Grenada-style scenario (an internal coup followed by a US military intervention).

Fourth, it disproportionately attacks fishing boats, accusing them of being part of the logistics of drug trafficking, in order to accustom regional public opinion to open military operations, with collateral damage in terms of human lives.

Fifth, it promotes the succession of María Corina Machado—directly or initially through Edmundo González—as a governing solution paving the way for an illiberal resolution to the structural crisis that began in 1983. The United States is aware of the instability of a potential government led by María Corina Machado, as her economic and political measures would quickly lead to a loss of popularity and render her presidency unstable, jeopardizing US interests. Given that Machado has repeatedly stated she will seek US support, including military support, the US strategic objective appears to be to facilitate her rise to power, paving the way for a “Haitian-style situation” in which government instability would lead Machado to request foreign intervention, occupying the territory and thus enabling the establishment of permanent military bases in Venezuela to ensure more direct control of oil reserves. From then on, MCM would become a simple, easily replaceable pawn on the American chessboard.

Sixth, criminalizing any potential resistance to this scenario would necessitate maintaining the state of emergency in Venezuela (following the US military attack), which fits perfectly within Trump's illiberal political agenda. This would aim to prevent the regrouping of progressive, democratic, and left-wing forces, and to avert the danger of a revolution in Venezuela.

Therefore, the awarding of the Nobel Prize to María Corina Machado must be seen as part of an imperialist strategy aimed at gaining much more direct control over Venezuela's wealth.

The tragedy of the Maduro regime lies in the fact that the only way to maintain power would be to revive the Popular National Programme that it decided to bury in 2014, abandon the bourgeois Bonapartist programme it attempted to implement in 2018, and develop genuine anti-imperialism, not just rhetoric. Certainly, the Maduro regime rightly denounces the deployment of American warships in the Caribbean, but it remains silent on the growing number of oil tankers that crisscross Lake Maracaibo daily, transporting crude oil to the United States, sold under neo-colonial conditions worse than those that prevailed before Chávez came to power. However, taking five steps backward in Maduro's neo-bourgeois programme would limit its capacity to accumulate wealth, paving the way for internal crises within this bourgeois bloc. Moreover, a return to the Popular National Programme would frighten both the new and the old bourgeoisie.

The dilemma seems to lie in Maduro's ability to build a genuine internal power dynamic that would make the Americans more cautious, a phenomenon impossible to predict except by returning to the Chavist agenda. This took on a dramatic urgency on October 15, 2025, when the *New York Times* announced that the Trump administration had authorized the CIA to launch destabilization operations on Venezuelan territory, to trigger the transition to a government led by María Corina Machado, now a Nobel Peace Prize laureate. This announcement should spur all progressive and anti-imperialist forces to denounce and carry out mass actions to stop the attack on continental national sovereignty; this attack on Venezuela is an attack on the entire region.

## Why award the Nobel Prize to MCM at this precise moment?

The awarding of the Nobel Prize to María Corina Machado is based on several geopolitical reasons. The first is to consolidate her local and international leadership, protecting it from erosion due to the lack of political solutions after the elections of June 28, 2024, particularly due to the realignment undertaken by the Maduro regime, with legislative and regional elections where it obtained an apparent majority.

Secondly, to repolarize the Venezuelan political debate. Nothing is more dangerous for the United States and the Venezuelan bourgeoisies—of the Fourth and Fifth Republics—than, in the face of the disenchantment caused by the lack of resolution to the terrible situation created by the Maduro regime and the impossibility of an orderly transition in the interest of capital, the emergence of a mass movement independent of bourgeois and imperialist interests. In fact, over the past year, the social fabric of resistance to the various forms of neoliberalism and illiberalism has been considerably rebuilt, even if it has not yet taken the form of a mass movement. The Nobel Prize for MCM aims to repolarize the debate between the Maduro regime and the faction of María Corina Machado, reducing the space necessary for building an alternative that is not aligned with the objectives of the White House and the Pentagon.

Third, it is essential to ensure that the agenda of a transitional government, or even a permanent government, is one of neocolonial dependence on the United States. The American administration cares little for the fate of the Venezuelan people; it uses them as mere pawns in the game of imperial power.

Fourth, given the possibility that the United States might launch direct military and intelligence operations on

Venezuelan soil, it is important to present its intervention as an action in support of regional peace and the leadership of a Norwegian Nobel Peace Prize laureate. The imprisonment or physical disappearance of MCM during these events would provide further justification for US military intervention in Venezuela.

In this sense, the 2025 Nobel Peace Prize is part of the strategy to consolidate the role of the United States in the region.

## The tasks of revolutionaries

This is a difficult time for those who embody the anti-capitalist struggle in Venezuela. Denouncing any attempt at an American attack or invasion of Venezuela is undoubtedly central to their political stances and actions. But this does not allow for hope that the survival of Maduro's neo-bourgeois regime will lead to the emergence of a government that guarantees the two conditions necessary for change from the working class's perspective: improved material living conditions and political freedoms to organize into unions and left-wing parties, enabling them to work, express their opinions, and mobilize with broad guarantees. This duality poses the challenge of building an anti-imperialism that transcends geopolitics, an anti-imperialism rooted in the reality of those who live by their labour. Is this achievable?

A potential government of María Corina Machado would not only continue the anti-popular programme initiated by the Maduro regime, but would intensify it even further. Indeed, María Corina Machado has not stated that her rise to power would mean the return of workers' rights to freely unionize, the right to strike, and the mobilization of the working class. Rather, she has outlined an illiberal structural adjustment programme that would allow for a way out of the bourgeois crisis that began in 1983, using market-driven solutions.

So, who to support? That is the question that is posed in Venezuela's confused situation. The answer can only be: the working class and its interests. Without them, all anti-imperialism is futile and only serves the bourgeois reorganization of Venezuela.

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*Translated by **International Viewpoint** from [Inoprecor](#).*

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