

Venezuela's Situation Requires a Great Deal of Pragmatism

In a bold move last week, the National Assembly of Venezuela, which was deprived of its constitutional powers by the government-controlled Supreme Court in March 2017, appointed National Assembly's leader Juan Guaidó as interim President of Venezuela. This triggered an immediate reaction on the streets where millions of Venezuelans gathered to demand the resignation of President Nicolás Maduro.

The appointment finds support in Article 233 of Venezuela's Constitution according to which the President of the Assembly must take the reins of the executive branch and call elections within 30 days if the President of the Republic becomes "unavailable to serve."

Few doubt the illegitimate nature of Maduro's authoritarian regime. Not only has it devastated [the productive capacity of the economy](#) via price controls, nationalizations, and hyperinflationary policies, but it has also undermined civic and personal liberties, imprisoning political opponents and pushing millions of Venezuelans to flee the country in search for a better life.

Until now, Maduro had always come out on top despite international pressures and the massive demonstrations against his government that took place in 2014 and 2017. However, this time seems different. Many countries have already recognized Guaidó as the legitimate President of Venezuela, including the United States, Canada, Brazil, Argentina, or Colombia.

In addition, the [European Union](#) is expected to do the same in the following days, which would leave the Venezuelan dictator in a very weak position in the international landscape. These

diplomatic moves suggest that there is a good chance that Maduro's regime will fall sooner than later. How should Venezuela's political opposition act now that winds of change seem to be blowing throughout the whole country?

This question seems pertinent given the track record of division and internal disputes in the democratic opposition to *Chavismo*. The persistent [violation of human rights](#) in Venezuela over the last two decades could lead some opposition politicians to place the pursuit of justice as a top priority. After all, the leaders of the Bolivarian Revolution deserve to be tried and convicted for crimes against humanity.

Yet this would be an enormous mistake. Venezuela is facing a unique opportunity to re-establish democracy and freedom, so the priority must be the overthrow of Maduro and the restoration of political, economic, and personal liberties. If this implies allowing Maduro and other top officials to abandon the country and settle down in Russia or Cuba to enjoy a golden exile, so be it.

Don't get me wrong. The pursuit of justice is important, especially for the victims of repression. Maduro and his acolytes will end up answering for their crimes. Yet pragmatism should be the guiding light of the opposition if the aim is to bring one of the darkest episodes in the contemporary history of Venezuela to an end once and for all.

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