

TRANSITION INTERRUPTED?

Prospects for Democratic Change
in Venezuela

An Interim Report of the Inter-American Dialogue's
Venezuela Working Group

APRIL 2019

© 2019. Inter-American Dialogue.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution – No Derivatives License. To view this license, visit (www.creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0). For re-use or distribution, please include this copyright notice.

First Edition
Printed In Washington, DC

Cover photo: Ruben Alfonso / Shutterstock.com

Layout: Tamar Ziff / Inter-American Dialogue

This report is a product of the Peter D. Bell Rule of Law Program at the Inter-American Dialogue. The views and recommendations contained herein are solely the opinions of the Venezuela Working Group and do not necessarily reflect the consensus views of the board, staff and members of the Inter-American Dialogue or any of its partners, donors, and/or supporting institutions. The Inter-American Dialogue is a non-partisan organization deeply committed to intellectual independence, transparency, and accountability. While donors are encouraged to participate in Dialogue activities, they do not influence our work in any way. Financial supporters have no control over the writing, methodology, analysis or findings of the Dialogue's research efforts.

TRANSITION INTERRUPTED?

Prospects for Democratic Change in Venezuela

APRIL 2019

An Interim Report of the Inter-American Dialogue's
Venezuela Working Group

Acknowledgments and Methodology

The Inter-American Dialogue's Venezuela Working Group (VWG) is a task force of prominent hemispheric leaders and experts committed to formulating and actively promoting policy responses to the crisis in Venezuela. This is the second report published under the Working Group's guidance. The first report, titled *No Strangers at the Gate*, focused on the Venezuelan refugee and migration crisis.

Created in September 2018, the Venezuela Working Group is chaired by former President Laura Chinchilla (Costa Rica) and former Ambassador Donna Hrinak (United States). VWG members include: Andrés Serbin (Argentina), Carlos Heredia (Mexico), Diego García-Sayán (Peru), Feliciano Reyna (Venezuela), Jamal Khokhar (Canada), Jeff Davidow (United States), Juan Carlos Pinzón (Colombia), Juan Gabriel Valdés (Chile), Roberta Jacobson (United States), Rosario Córdoba (Colombia), Sergio Etchegoyen (Brazil), Serena Joseph-Harris (Trinidad and Tobago), Vanessa Rubio (Mexico), and Verónica Zubillaga (Venezuela).

This report is based on deliberations of the Venezuela Working Group, as well as documentary research and interviews with officials from governments, multilateral organizations, academia, and civil society organizations. Some of these meetings took place during the VWG's plenary meeting in Bogotá, Colombia in February 2019. The report was written by Michael Camilleri, Director of the Dialogue's Peter D. Bell Rule of Law Program and coordinator of the VWG. Its conclusions reflect the broad consensus of the Venezuela Working Group, but not necessarily the precise individual views of every member of the VWG.

The Dialogue is profoundly grateful for the excellent contributions of the Venezuela Working Group, led by co-chairs Laura Chinchilla and Donna Hrinak and under the superb direction of Michael Camilleri. Special thanks to Tamar Ziff, Denisse Yanovich, Irene Estefanía González, Leonie Rauls, Catharine Christie, and Laura Gualdron for their valuable assistance in the organization, research, writing, review, and editing of this report. The Dialogue also thanks the Open Society Foundations and the Ford Foundation for their support of the Venezuela Working Group.

Michael Shifter
President, Inter-American Dialogue



Table of Contents

1. Introduction: A Step Toward Transition	6
2. Context: Venezuela on the Brink.....	7
3. Horizon Scanning: Scenarios and Outliers	9
4. Key Stakeholders.....	11
5. Identifying Risks, Seizing Opportunities.....	13
Notes.....	18

Introduction: A Step Toward Transition

As 2018 drew to a close, Venezuela's strongman Nicolás Maduro and his inner circle appeared to be tightening their grip on power. In the preceding years, Maduro and his governing clique had coopted or silenced virtually every democratic institution in the country, from the courts to the press to the electoral council. They stocked the senior ranks of the military with loyalists, many of them implicated in the ruling regime's corruption, and relied on paramilitary *colectivos* as additional bulwarks against unrest. They responded to the 2015 opposition takeover of the National Assembly by usurping the constitutional prerogatives of the legislature, the country's only remaining democratically legitimate institution, and creating a parallel National Constituent Assembly. They wore down their political opposition with years of persecution and repression. And they engineered via fraudulent elections a new presidential term for Maduro beginning on January 10, 2019, consolidating Venezuela's descent into dictatorial rule.

Under Nicolás Maduro, the country's economic situation grew dire: in 2018 the economy shrunk by 18 percent, inflation was 1.35 million percent,¹ and Venezuelans fled the

country by the thousands every day; over three million have now left Venezuela.² But Maduro turned even hunger into a tool of control, creating the Orwellian CLAP (*Comités Locales de Abastecimiento y Producción*)³ system of government food handouts conditioned on political loyalty.

Just one month later, at the end of January 2019, Venezuela's political circumstances had been radically transformed—burgeoning hope for a peaceful, democratic restoration in the country. Maduro now faces his toughest challenge since taking power in 2013: the emergence of Juan Guaidó, the young National Assembly leader who has quickly achieved widespread recognition as the alternative, interim president of Venezuela. Basing their claim on Articles 233, 333, and 350 of the Venezuelan Constitution,⁴ Guaidó's supporters and fellow lawmakers assert that the presidency is vacant as a result of Maduro's illegitimate reelection, and should therefore pass to the head of the legislature until free and fair elections can be held within the next twelve months.

More than 50 countries⁵ have now recognized Guaidó as Venezuela's leader, including the United States, 23 of 28



Photo credit: Rodrigo Suarez / Flickr / CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

members of the European Union, and the Lima Group,⁶ comprised of Canada and major Latin American countries (though Mexico, while remaining a member, has not signed recent Lima Group declarations or independently recognized Guaidó.) The international recognition afforded Guaidó was a consequence not only of Maduro's patent illegitimacy, but also of Guaidó's demonstrated capacity to inspire Venezuelans to demand change and take to the streets despite the risk—and reality—of violence and repression by Maduro's forces. Guaidó has already put a transition into motion, appointing officials, orchestrating the passage of a transition roadmap statute by the National Assembly,⁷ and taking control of certain overseas government assets.

A peaceful, democratic transition seems possible in Venezuela for the first time in years. It is by no means, however, inevitable. Guaidó's initial strategy for producing a constitutional transition appeared both well-conceived and well-executed, but it hit a roadblock on February 23rd, when an ambitious effort to deliver humanitarian aid into Venezuela was foiled by security forces and armed *colectivos*, a reminder that Maduro will not go easily and maintains a capacity to employ legal and extralegal force in defense of his rule and survival. Guaidó and his loyalists calculated that Maduro's forces would split with him rather than deny food to starving Venezuelans; they were proved wrong.

Achieving the peaceful, democratic restoration that Venezuela needs and deserves will demand focus, unity, an affirmative and adaptable strategy, and great courage from those who are fighting for change and from those in the international community who back them. The analysis and recommendations in this report are offered as a constructive contribution in full support of this objective.

Context: Venezuela on the Brink

Venezuela's descent into democratic decay, economic and social disintegration, and state-sponsored violence and criminal expansion renders a peaceful, democratic transition urgent and essential.

The gradual erosion of democratic checks and balances—and, as a consequence, citizens' civil and political rights—has been a hallmark of Venezuelan life since Maduro's predecessor and political godfather, Hugo Chávez, came to power in 1999.⁸ However, the process accelerated in 2013 when Chavez died and was succeeded by Maduro, who did not have his predecessor's charisma or political skill and

could no longer rely on high oil prices to garner popular support. Under Maduro, the few remaining vestiges of rule of law and constitutional integrity have all but vanished. Opposition politicians are jailed,⁹ barred from office,¹⁰ tortured, and even killed.¹¹ Protesters are tear gassed and shot.¹²

As documented by UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet, security forces including the FAES (*Fuerzas de Acción Especial de la Policía*) have engaged in a pattern of extrajudicial executions, particularly in response to January 2019 protests in poor neighborhoods in Caracas.^{13,14} Furthermore, formally independent institutions, most prominently the Supreme Court (TSJ)¹⁵ and the National Electoral Council (CNE),¹⁶ are simply extensions of Maduro's authority—used to rubber stamp his decisions, shield his regime's criminality, preserve his authoritarian rule, and render powerless the opposition-held legislature. On January 10, 2019, Venezuela broke definitively with democracy when Maduro purported to begin a new presidential term based on illegitimate elections.

The erosion of democratic checks and balances began when Maduro's predecessor and political godfather, Hugo Chávez, came to power in 1999. The process accelerated in 2013 when Maduro succeeded Chavez, and under Maduro the few remaining vestiges of rule of law and constitutional integrity have all but vanished.

Venezuelans today suffer not just the consequences of authoritarian consolidation, but the impact of a regime-made economic and humanitarian crisis. The Venezuelan economy shrunk by half between 2013 and 2018.¹⁷ The IMF predicts that inflation will hit 1.37 million percent in 2019 and that real GDP will decrease by 18 percent.¹⁸ Oil production, the lifeblood of Venezuela's economy, has declined from 3.3 million barrels per day two decades ago to barely one million barrels today.¹⁹

One study showed that in 2018 only one in ten Venezuelans could afford daily food,²⁰ while another survey found that 80 percent of households are food insecure.²¹ Children die from preventable health issues such as malnutrition, acute

diarrhea, and acute respiratory infections.²² A recent report by Human Rights Watch and the Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health documents a surge in cases of measles, diphtheria, malaria, and tuberculosis as vaccination programs collapse. HIV patients are unable to get treatment, and maternal and infant mortality rates rose 65 percent and 30 percent respectively in just one year.²³ Over 3 million Venezuelans have left the country,²⁴ and the United Nations predicts that as many as 2 million more may flee in 2019.²⁵

Under Chávez and Maduro, corruption in Venezuela has become endemic.

The Venezuelan government refuses to acknowledge the humanitarian crisis and has regarded any suggestion of such a crisis as fiction or Western-contrived propaganda. Maduro told the UN General Assembly in September 2018 that, “Venezuela is the victim of world media attacks designed to construct a supposed humanitarian crisis so as to justify a military intervention,” adding that, “the fabricated migrant crisis is proving to be a lie.”²⁶ Nonetheless, in late March 2019 the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies announced that it had been granted unhindered access to deliver humanitarian aid in Venezuela.²⁷

While millions of Venezuelans contend with hunger and disease, well-connected regime insiders and military leaders have grown fabulously wealthy from corruption and criminality. Indeed, under Chávez and Maduro corruption in Venezuela has become endemic. Transparency International’s 2018 Corruption Perception Index ranks Venezuela as the most corrupt nation in the Americas,²⁸ and the World Justice Project ranks Venezuela dead last in its 2019 Rule of Law Index.²⁹

Legal actions by the U.S. government provide a window into the scale and lucre of high-level corruption in Venezuela. The U.S. Treasury Department froze \$500 million in assets of Maduro’s former vice president, Tarek El Aissami,³⁰ and the Justice Department recently brought criminal charges against him as a narcotics kingpin.³¹ President Chávez’s former bodyguard and subsequent national treasurer recently admitted in a separate case to taking over \$1 billion in bribes, mainly connected to Venezuela’s highly distorted currency exchange market.³² Gold, most of which

leaves Venezuela via contraband routes to countries such as Turkey and the Gulf States, has emerged as an additional source of corrupt activity.³³

The behavior of Venezuela’s governing class not only has a devastating impact on the country’s citizens, but destabilizing effects on the broader region. Venezuela has become a safe haven for guerillas and organized crime, from Colombia’s National Liberation Army (ELN) to mafias involved in drug trafficking and illegal gold mining.³⁴ The ELN now operates in at least 13 of the 24 states in Venezuela, where it enjoys safe haven and its operations are sometimes abetted by security forces or local officials.³⁵

It is tempting to look at Venezuela’s collapsing economy and empty-shell institutions and label it a failed state. Certainly, the days-long blackouts in early March³⁶ and Maduro’s increasing deployment of the violent *colectivos*³⁷ suggest a country where both basic public services and law and order are broken. The reality, however, is even more pernicious. The regime headed by Maduro continues to control Venezuela, however poorly, but it does so by force and in the increasingly naked interest of its own profit and preservation. If Maduro and his allies continue to cling to power, it is all but certain that their rule will be characterized by greater authoritarianism, deprivation, and collusion with criminal actors—with severe consequences for Venezuela’s citizens and neighbors.

In this context, it is remarkable that there remains any semblance of democratic institutionality in Venezuela. The National Assembly, controlled by the opposition since December 2015 elections that were recognized by both Maduro and his opponents, represents a unique remaining bastion of democratic legitimacy. The National Assembly’s very existence is fragile.

Maduro has attempted to render it powerless by creating a parallel National Constituent Assembly while persecuting, forcing into exile, and arresting many legislators (the detention of Deputy Juan Carlos Requesens by the national intelligence service SEBIN is a notable example³⁸).

Nonetheless, the National Assembly provides a vehicle for Venezuela to achieve a peaceful, democratic transition within the framework of its constitution and with the participation of all political sectors, including chavistas. In this respect, Juan Guaidó’s emergence and roadmap for democratic restoration—Maduro’s resignation, a transitional government, and free and fair general elections—represents the most promising route to such a transition. At present, however, it appears far from inevitable.

Horizon Scanning: Scenarios & "Black Swans"

Anticipating the future course of events in Venezuela is a difficult exercise. The scenarios outlined below are offered not as an attempt to predict the future, but as a tool to elucidate the key factors and central actors that will shape coming developments, and to permit the evaluation of potential courses of action and their most likely consequences.

Scenario 1: "Clean" Democratic Transition

At present, the "cleanest" transition scenario is the one sought by Guaidó and his allies. It is a scenario in which the Venezuelan armed forces respond to overwhelming economic, diplomatic, and popular pressure by refusing to suppress protests and prop up the Maduro regime, and by ultimately recognizing Guaidó as interim president and commander in chief. Maduro's opponents have appealed openly to the military to switch their loyalties, and the National Assembly has advanced an amnesty law to incentivize defections from the regime.

While some one thousand Venezuelan troops have reportedly left the ranks, senior military officials appear loyal to Maduro

thus far. Even if the top brass were to abandon him, it would likely demand certain guarantees—personal and institutional—as a condition for supporting Guaidó to lead the transition. In this respect, even a "clean" transition will involve potentially complex negotiations. Increased violence by armed *colectivos* that remain loyal to Maduro and ELN guerrillas already present in Venezuela is possible in this scenario, which may be exacerbated by the almost six million civilian-held firearms in Venezuela.³⁹ A Guaidó-led transitional government would be well positioned to mobilize national and international support to address the socio-economic crisis, organize elections, and begin to slow and ultimately reverse outward migration trends.

Scenario 2: Extended Standoff

A second scenario is a prolonged extension of the current reality: a standoff between parallel presidents. Such a standoff would be naturally unstable. Guaidó and his allies will hope that the growing pressure of economic sanctions will erode Maduro's authority and the cohesion of his regime, with shrinking oil receipts sapping Maduro's capacity to purchase loyalty and placate a restive population. Conversely, Maduro will calculate that his opposition's energy and momentum will dissipate over time, as will the central premise of Guaidó's interim presidency (organizing new elections), even as Maduro presides over a deepening humanitarian catastrophe.

Conceivably, Maduro could hang on—as other dictators have done⁴⁰—by keeping his generals loyal, extinguishing the

opposition, resigning his citizens to deprivation, and leaning on Cuba, Russia, and China for support. If Maduro is capable of riding out the sanctions, the worsening humanitarian situation could give rise to divisions over strategy among those supporting the transition. Factors such as the impact of U.S. oil sanctions, the growth or dissipation of protests, the unity of Guaidó's coalition, and the actions of the international community will shape the relative strength on either side. Here again, the potential for increased violence and chaos is real. A potential trigger could be the arrest of Guaidó after Maduro's National Constituent Assembly withdrew his parliamentary immunity of April 2.⁴¹ In this scenario the pace of migration of Venezuelans to neighboring countries is unlikely to diminish, and may even increase.

Scenario 3: Dictator Swap

A third scenario would see regime insiders or the military push Maduro aside but hold power for themselves rather than transfer it to Guaidó in accordance with the constitutional order of succession—perhaps with vague promises of new elections on an indeterminate timeline that ignores the Constitution's requirement of elections within 30 days.⁴² This would, in essence, be a coup d'état by one non-democratic actor against another. Such a scenario could potentially deliver greater stability and some economic adjustments, but also possibly

greater repression and an uncertain democratic outlook. It could produce divisions in the international community and Guaidó's coalition regarding whether to engage with or resist those who seize power. Uncertainty and divisions within the democratically-minded international community could jeopardize support for Venezuela's stabilization and economic recovery, with corresponding effects on continued outward migration.

While the abovementioned scenarios appear most plausible based on the current trajectory of events in Venezuela, there are additional, outlier scenarios that cannot be entirely discounted.

Outlier 1: Foreign Military Intervention

The first outlier scenario is the possibility of some form of foreign military intervention. This was rejected by the Lima Group in late February⁴³ after being floated by Guaidó's representative to the Group. However, there is growing discussion of the applicability of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine⁴⁴—which contemplates the use of force under Chapter VII of the UN Charter as a last resort—to the case of Venezuela.⁴⁵ The U.S. government has indicated that military options remain on the table⁴⁶ while insisting it is focused on peaceful transition and considers the use of force undesirable.⁴⁶ However, the Russian government's deployment of two planeloads of personnel and equipment to Venezuela in mid-March provoked a reaction from the White House that recalled Cold War rhetoric and the tenets of the Monroe Doctrine in its referencing of the Russian presence as “a direct threat to international peace and security in the region.”⁴⁸ What's more, in early April U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said that NATO countries had agreed Russian troops need to withdraw from Venezuela.⁴⁹

Outlier 2: Internal Military Conflict

A second outlier scenario is an internal conflict involving competing factions of the military, with *colectivos* aligned with those loyal to Maduro. Thus far, there is little evidence that Venezuelan soldiers want to fight each other, but this could change if some—but not all—military leaders split with Maduro, or a barracks rebellion erupts. An internal armed conflict in Venezuela could have far-reaching regional implications, especially if foreign militaries intervene or the ELN allies actively with pro-Maduro forces. This scenario would exacerbate the humanitarian crisis and political instability.

Outlier 3: Opposition Coup

A third “black swan” scenario would see extreme segments of the opposition to Maduro plotting a non-democratic coup from the far-right in response to frustrated attempts at peaceful, democratic change. The coup would be followed by a crack-down against Maduro loyalists. Elections would be postponed past what the Constitution requires or rigged to exclude chavistas. The international support needed to overcome Venezuela's political and socioeconomic crises would be jeopardized.

Juan Guaidó's emergence and roadmap for democratic restoration—Maduro's resignation, a transitional government, and free and fair general elections—represents the most promising route to such a transition. At present, however, it appears far from inevitable.

Key Stakeholders

While these scenarios are necessarily rough in outline, they point to a fast-evolving and potentially volatile interaction among four key sets of actors as determinative of Venezuela's near-term future.

Maduro and his loyalists



Photo credit: Cancillería de Ecuador / Flickr / CC BY-SA 2.0

Nicolás Maduro has thus far responded to the emergence of a formidable opposition leader by digging in his heels and resorting to force when necessary. In the past he has used negotiations with his political opposition to buy time and political oxygen, raising questions about his willingness to dialogue in good faith—even with a weakened hand. Maduro's governing clique is not homogenous, but it is united by an interest in political survival. The January 27 detention and subsequent release of Juan Guaidó revealed divisions and competing centers of authority within the regime.⁵⁰

The democratic coalition



Photo credit: Senado Federal / Flickr / CC BY 2.0

Juan Guaidó united the notoriously factious political opposition to Maduro around a strategy that was centered on the democratic legitimacy of the National Assembly and succeeded in inspiring the support of both Venezuelan citizens and significant segments of the international community. In the wake of the frustrated February 23 attempt to deliver humanitarian aid, however, Guaidó and his allies seemed to be searching for a Plan B—and briefly lurched toward calling for military intervention.⁵¹ Guaidó recovered his footing when he returned to Venezuela to a hero's welcome, and refocused his supporters on the struggle for peaceful, democratic change. If an extended standoff with Maduro occurs, Guaidó's strength will depend on his capacity to maintain the unity, motivation, and focus of his political allies and followers—including, most visibly, his capacity to bring supporters onto the streets to sustain the pressure on Maduro.

The Venezuelan military



Photo credit: Mil.ru / Wikimedia Commons / CC BY 4.0

As things stand, the Venezuelan security forces hold the balance of power in the country.⁵² If they were to transfer their support to Guaidó, they could put in motion a peaceful, democratic transition. If they remain loyal to Maduro, it is difficult to envision such a transition occurring, barring outside coercion or a mutiny by the military rank and file. In addition to the politicization of the armed forces by Chávez and Maduro, the complicity of the military's upper ranks in corruption, criminality, and serious human rights violations creates profit and self-preservation incentives for the generals to prop up the current system. The willingness of armed *colectivos* to do the dirty work of repression may provide Maduro with a bulwark in the event the military declines to suppress protests but refrains from switching its loyalty to Guaidó. The number of soldiers who have defected to Colombia now reportedly

exceeds 1,000, a non-trivial figure but a small proportion of the estimated 95,000 to 150,000 members of Venezuela's formal armed forces.⁵³

The international community

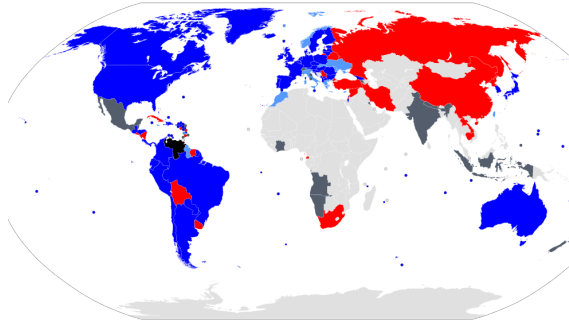


Photo credit: Venezuela president recognition map 2019 / Wikimedia Commons / Public Domain

Legend:	Blue - Recognize Guaidó
	Red - Recognize Maduro
	Dark grey - Neutral countries
	Light grey - No data

The international community—most notably the Lima Group, the United States, the OAS Secretary General, and most of the European Union—has played a crucial role in elevating Guaidó and isolating Maduro, helping create the current opening for peaceful, democratic change. Its future role in augmenting sanctions and other forms of pressure on Maduro, creating a workable framework for meaningful negotiations if a window for genuine dialogue emerges, or—in the case of Maduro allies such as Russia, China, and Cuba—sustaining the current regime will be equally critical. In addition to the aforementioned actors, international engagement on the Venezuela crisis includes the EU-led International Contact Group (ICG),⁵⁴ the “Montevideo Mechanism” announced by Mexico and Uruguay,⁵⁵ and potential diplomatic efforts by the United Nations and others. The respective and collective effectiveness of these efforts will be shaped by whether they reinforce one another, fail to coordinate, or enter into outright contradiction (over military intervention, for example).

Even among those that recognize and support Guaidó—the United States, the Lima Group, and most of the European Union (Italy is a notable holdout)—there are subtle differences of approach that could grow more pronounced over time. It is not clear that these governments have a clear strategy—much less a unified one—in the increasingly likely event that Maduro holds onto power past the immediate phase of the Guaidó’s emergence.

In such an event, Maduro could attempt to use the mediation efforts of self-declared neutral countries such as Mexico and Uruguay to divide the international coalition as well as his

domestic opposition. In particular, efforts led by the United States to economically asphyxiate the Maduro regime could emerge as a wedge issue. While the Maduro regime bears overwhelming responsibility for Venezuela’s economic and humanitarian crisis, U.S. sanctions on the oil sector have bitten into Venezuela’s principal source of income and foreign exchange,⁵⁶ a reality that will almost inevitably have a collateral humanitarian impact.⁵⁷ The longer Maduro holds onto power, the more his critics in the international community may come to disagree on the relative costs and benefits of such sanctions. Finally, while Maduro is more isolated than ever, he is not lacking entirely for friendly nations. Maduro continues to count Cuba, China, Russia, Turkey, and Iran among his allies, though the nature of their support differs.

Cuba is estimated to have as many as 25,000 advisors embedded in the Venezuelan military and intelligence services, as well as in Maduro’s personal guard.⁵⁸ These advisors provide Maduro with crucial protection against potential plots to unseat him, including those emanating from the military itself. Turkey has emerged as the lynchpin of the Venezuelan gold trade, providing Maduro a much-needed source of revenue (\$900 million in 2018) at a time when oil revenues are shrinking.⁵⁹ Iran’s strong political ties to Venezuela date to Chávez’s days, and in recent years it has provided credit, extended its commercial reach, and engaged in joint military exercises in Venezuela.⁶⁰ It may also be a destination for Venezuelan gold exported through Turkey.⁶¹

China has done more than any country to bankroll the Chávez-Maduro regime, lending Venezuela \$67.2 billion since 2007, of which at least \$20 billion remains unpaid.⁶² China’s public statements on Guaidó suggest it is interested above all in maintaining a bilateral relationship that protects its economic interests however the situation in Venezuela evolves.⁶³ Thus far, however, it has not tangibly distanced itself from Maduro. Russia, in contrast, appears driven largely by geopolitics—the opportunity to strengthen a beachhead in the Western Hemisphere and project its power in the United States’ sphere of influence.⁶⁴ Russia has backed Maduro loudly, consistently, and tangibly in the form of arms sales, the deployment of military personnel, and actions (oil sales and purchases) to offset U.S. sanctions. Maduro’s defense apparatus includes Sukhoi fighter jets and antiaircraft systems purchased from Russia.⁶⁵ While the interests of China and Russia are not perfectly overlapping, neither is motivated by democratic outcomes nor likely to play a constructive role in the transition unless necessary to protect its economic and geopolitical interests. They can also provide Maduro crucial protection at the United Nations via their veto power as permanent members of the UN Security Council.⁶⁶

Identifying Risks, Seizing Opportunities

The foregoing analysis offers reasons for hope, but also points to a complex and ultimately uncertain future for Venezuela. The urgent need for a peaceful, democratic transition leading to reinstitutionalization and economic recovery merits the full focus and support of the international community. Such a transition must be driven by the Venezuelan people, with the National Assembly's leadership headed by Juan Guaidó at the forefront given its singular democratic legitimacy, and with the participation of all political factions, including dissident chavista sectors who will be essential to a sustainable transition.

While it is difficult to offer with any confidence a specific roadmap for successful and peaceful democratic transition in Venezuela, the preceding analysis of potential scenarios and key stakeholders allows us to identify risks and opportunities and to suggest the responses most likely to contribute to democratic change in Venezuela.

1. REMAIN UNITED

Risk: Competing Approaches

The greatest source of strength for those working to restore democracy in Venezuela is the current unity among and between actors inside and outside the country. Regional diplomacy on Venezuela has been marked by an impressive assertiveness and coordination among major countries in Latin America along with Canada and the United States, embodied most prominently by the Lima Group. Since the turn of the year, this has been matched by a similar unity among the Venezuelan political opposition to Maduro, under the leadership of Juan Guaidó. In Latin America, Argentina was an early leader in galvanizing the region, Peru and Ecuador have played important convening roles, and Colombia and Brazil have emerged as persistent advocates of increased pressure against Maduro, even if Mexico (without formally withdrawing from the Lima Group) has adopted a policy of neutrality since President Andrés Manuel López Obrador took office in December 2018.

There have also been promising recent efforts to solidify the hemispheric consensus on Venezuela through outreach to countries in the Caribbean Community, where Maduro maintained allies due in large part to years of largesse through the PetroCaribe program.^{67 68}

Recent months have seen a proliferation of multilateral initiatives in response to the escalating crisis in Venezuela, a welcome sign of the international community's attention to the issue. However, these initiatives could come to compete with each other, offering Maduro breathing space and/or splintering Guaidó's coalition—especially in the event of an extended standoff with Maduro. Such a standoff will almost certainly be marked by a further breakdown in law and order and a deepening humanitarian crisis.

Tensions over tactics could emerge, especially regarding the appropriateness of sectoral economic sanctions, particularly those on Venezuelan state oil company PDVSA. Such sanctions aim to deny resources to the Maduro regime and weaken its hold on power, but as time goes on they may also exacerbate Maduro's man-made economic catastrophe. Likewise, attempting to force aid into the country is a useful way to shame Maduro, but it also risks politicizing aid delivery, giving Maduro a pretext to close border crossings (as he did on February 23),⁶⁹ and thus complicating the work of the few humanitarian groups currently able to operate within Venezuela. For both Guaidó and his international allies, resolving these tactical dilemmas while avoiding divisions is critical to sustaining the environment that opened the door to a peaceful, democratic transition.

The Lima Group, the United States, and the ICG will maximize their effectiveness by agreeing to common objectives and coordinating their actions. A complementary combination of carrots and sticks by these actors could work well.

Opportunity: Complementary Strategies

The Lima Group, the United States, and the ICG will maximize their effectiveness by agreeing to common objectives and coordinating their actions. This does not necessarily mean they will adopt the exact same measures. As the proverbial "bad cop," the U.S. government will continue to take the lead on sanctions, for example, while the ICG dangles negotiations in return for early elections under

free and fair conditions. The complementary combination of carrots and sticks by these actors can be effective, provided they coordinate with each other and with the Venezuelan National Assembly leadership. The United States, for example, could lay out the conditions under which it will ease sanctions, while the ICG should outline consequences in the event Maduro fails to heed its call for early presidential elections—a step it declined to take at its March 28 meeting.⁷⁰

Maduro's endorsement of the Montevideo Mechanism should serve as a reminder that he will not miss an opportunity to spot potential divisions among his opponents, whether by embracing a friendly mediation forum or exploiting differences over economic sanctions to drive his false "economic war" narrative.⁷¹ As the coalition of nations seeking democratic restoration in Venezuela expands, so too will the need to maintain fluid diplomatic channels for effective coordination.

2. AVOID OVERREACH

Risk: Use of Force

There is perhaps no greater risk to the unity of those committed to democratic restoration in Venezuela than overreach by one or more elements of the coalition. The most obvious such action would be resorting to the use of force. Military action led by the United States, even if accompanied by one or two Latin American countries, would create deep and irreconcilable fissures in the existing coalition. These fissures would potentially hinder the success of any military operation itself and almost certainly have lasting negative impacts on the reconstruction efforts and the legitimacy of a future Venezuelan government.

A military campaign—even a precision bombing effort rather than a full-scale invasion—would likely be complex, damaging, expensive, and followed by a lengthy peace and stabilization operation.⁷² The recently expanded Russian military presence, while complicating potential U.S. military options (particularly air strikes, as in Syria), also increases the likelihood of escalatory provocations by competing foreign powers, and ultimately the risk of a proxy war.

Even rhetorical invocation of military options can plant the seeds of division and generate sympathy for Maduro among some Latin American citizens and political parties, with negative long-term consequences. Similarly, rhetoric that invokes military action, paints the struggle for

democracy in Venezuela in ideological terms, or situates Venezuela within a broader regional campaign against leftist governments—such as the Trump Administration's invocation of a "troika of tyranny"—is unnecessarily divisive and ultimately counterproductive.

There is perhaps no greater risk to the unity of those committed to democratic restoration in Venezuela than overreach by one or more elements of the coalition. The most obvious such action would be resorting to the use of force.

In other areas, the line between assertiveness and overreach may be less obvious, and could shift over time. U.S. sanctions on the Venezuelan oil sector appeared to have broad support among likeminded countries when they were announced in late January, but they may become a wedge issue in the event Maduro holds onto power and the humanitarian situation continues to spiral—with corresponding consequences for neighboring countries impacted by outward migration.

Opportunity: Build Consensus and a Well-Calibrated Pressure Campaign

Both the Venezuelan National Assembly and the international community should commit to a peaceful, democratic transition. The February 25 meeting of the Lima Group and U.S. Vice President Mike Pence represented a positive step in this direction,⁷³ and Guaidó has similarly affirmed his commitment to "peaceful solutions."⁷⁴

On economic sanctions, the United States in particular will need to calibrate its actions carefully, in consultation with its international partners and Guaidó's interim government. Actions that weaken Maduro by denying him access to the

resources used to maintain regime cohesion constitute a potentially crucial form of leverage. However, when these actions have collateral impacts on the Venezuelan people, their humanitarian costs may come to outweigh their benefits as a form of political pressure—particularly in the event of an extended standoff between Maduro and Guaidó. In such a scenario, the United States and its partners will need to assess continually the relative utility of these measures. At the least, they should offer humanitarian assistance to offset the impact of sanctions and present a clear set of steps (on democracy and human rights) that the Maduro regime can take to obtain sanctions relief. Even if Maduro is unlikely to accept either one, such measures will enhance the possibility that sectoral sanctions divide Maduro’s coalition rather than his opposition’s.

3. BE DOGGED BUT NOT DOGMATIC

Risk: Mismatched Means and Objectives

Juan Guaidó’s strategy and messaging demonstrate a sophistication that frequently eluded previous opposition leaders. He and his allies are implacable in their demand that Maduro cede power, but conciliatory toward those in the military and the chavista base (for whom the continuation of Chávez’s revolution is at stake) that they know will need to be included in any successful democratic transition. When Guaidó ran into headwinds on February 23, however, he and his allies were not clear on the path forward.

Unconditional surrender by Maduro and his inner circle is an alluring goal, and one that helps keep Guaidó’s coalition united, but it may not prove achievable. The coalition rightly rejects calls for open-ended negotiations with Maduro in light of past experience.⁷⁵ But the reality of Venezuela’s current power structure—particularly the role of the military—is that the transition will be negotiated; the only question is when, with whom, and on what terms.

Opportunity: Push Hard but Look for Off Ramps

Guaidó and his coalition partners are right to insist on a constitutional transition and to refuse to repeat the errors of past attempts to negotiate with Maduro. Their focus on steadily asphyxiating the regime through economic, diplomatic, and popular pressure has proven promising, if not yet decisive. At the same time, they will require the tactical flexibility to adjust to unexpected scenarios and provide potential off ramps to military officials and regime insiders. To some extent, Guaidó and the National Assembly

have already done this, particularly through their public messaging around the amnesty law.

In the event of an extended standoff with Maduro, the challenge of balancing maximalist goals against balance-of-power realities will grow more acute. This goes for Guaidó and his coalition partners, as well as their supporters in the international community. The failure of past negotiations is not a reason to dismiss the concept of a negotiated solution entirely. It does underscore, however, the importance of judging accurately when a “hurting stalemate”⁷⁶ has been reached that would allow negotiations to proceed, with appropriate preconditions, in an environment that offers a genuine chance to achieve a peaceful, democratic transition.

Probing that question through quiet contacts with regime officials and military leaders, and with governments allied with Maduro, will be necessary. In this regard, meetings of the U.S. special envoy for Venezuela with representatives of both Maduro’s regime⁷⁷ and the Russian government,⁷⁸ while so far unfruitful, demonstrate a constructive willingness to test the prospect of a negotiated solution. The international community will play a pivotal role in any future talks on the future of Venezuela—whether by creating a framework for such negotiations, forcing the respective sides to the table, applying the pressure that helps produce a hurting stalemate, or reinforcing the legal and security guarantees (consistent with international law) that will be needed for talks to succeed.

4. STAY ENGAGED

Risk: Humanitarian Fatigue

The Venezuelan humanitarian emergency,⁷⁹ manifested most visibly in the largest refugee and migration flow in Western Hemisphere history is only growing worse. Peaceful, democratic restoration is indispensable for Venezuela to begin reversing the economic catastrophe and institutional breakdown at the root of this crisis. But while Juan Guaidó offers Venezuelans new hope for a democratic future, the number of Venezuelans fleeing the country each day remains undiminished—a reminder that political developments, however promising, should not divert attention from urgent humanitarian needs. Even if democracy were restored in Venezuela tomorrow, the task of rebuilding Venezuela’s economy and institutions will be long and arduous, and millions of Venezuelans will continue living beyond the country’s borders for years.

The existing and, for now, perpetually expanding population of Venezuelan refugees and migrants has been met by neighboring countries with admirable solidarity. However, with resources and safety nets straining heavily, xenophobia towards Venezuelans is emerging with potentially volatile political consequences that could have repercussions for regional stability and Venezuela's own democratic transition.

Opportunity: Prioritize Humanitarian Response while Preparing for the "Day After"

The international community must continue to mobilize humanitarian assistance for Venezuelan refugees and migrants, and to the extent possible for those within Venezuela. Solidarity, collective responsibility, and burden sharing remain fundamental to an adequate, sustainable response to the forced migration crisis.⁸⁰ The permission to deliver humanitarian aid granted to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in late March provides donor countries the opportunity to support a major expansion of humanitarian services in Venezuela.⁸¹ The United Nations has a critical role to play; it should explicitly recognize the humanitarian crisis in Venezuela and lead a large-scale response.⁸² It should also augment its monitoring of the human rights situation in the country, following up on the recent visit by a team from the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.⁸³

In the event of a successful transition, Venezuela's government will need both immediate and sustained institutional and economic support. A "day after" analysis is beyond the scope of this report, but multilateral bodies such as the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) can begin preparing immediately to support the *Plan de Rescate del País* approved by the National Assembly on January 29th, as called for by the Lima Group.⁸⁴ The IDB, in collaboration with other inter-American institutions such as the OAS and the Pan-American Health Organization, will be critical in supporting both short-term humanitarian needs and longer-term development. In addition, the need to disarm Venezuela's armed political groups, most prominently the *colectivos*,⁸⁵ represents a crucial peace and stabilization challenge that will require advanced planning by multilateral organizations and national governments with relevant experience.

The success of any transition will require immediate action to rebuild the democratic institutions of the Venezuelan state, beginning with its constitutional powers: the Supreme Court of Justice, National Electoral Council, Attorney General's Office, Ombudsperson, and General Comptroller. The rule of law, including an independent justice system that includes a transitional justice mechanism, will need to be rebuilt from scratch. Free and fair elections will require guaranties such as the re-legalization of political parties, reinstatement of political figures, and international observation. These actions should take place within the framework of an immediate, renewed adherence to the OAS Charter, the American Convention on Human Rights, and the compulsory jurisdiction of the Inter-American Human Rights Court, as well as the permanent presence of human rights missions both from the United Nations and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

Endnotes

¹ Tom Phillips, "Maduro starts new Venezuela term by accusing US or imperialist 'world war,'" *The Guardian*, January 10, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jan/10/venezuela-president-nicolas-maduro-begins-second-term>.

² "Asylum-seekers from Venezuela 2014-2018," UNHCR, January 31, 2019, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/vensit>.

³ Adreina Aponte and Ana Isabel Martinez, "For poor Venezuelans, a box of food may sway vote for Maduro," *Reuters*, March 12, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-venezuela-politics-food/for-poor-venezuelans-a-box-of-food-may-sway-vote-for-maduro-idUSKCN1G0173>.

⁴ Article 233 states: "The President of the Republic shall become permanently unavailable to serve by reason of any of the following events: death; resignation; removal from office by decision of the Supreme Tribunal of Justice; permanent physical or mental disability certified by a medical board designated by the Supreme Tribunal of Justice with the approval of the National Assembly; abandonment of his position, duly declared by the National Assembly; and recall by popular vote.

When an elected President becomes permanently unavailable to serve prior to his inauguration, a new election by universal suffrage and direct ballot shall be held within 30 consecutive days. Pending election and inauguration of the new President, the President of the National Assembly shall take charge of the Presidency of the Republic.

When the President of the Republic becomes permanently unavailable to serve during the first four years of this constitutional term of office, a new election by universal suffrage and direct ballot shall be held within 30 consecutive days. Pending election and inauguration of the new President, the Executive Vice-President shall take charge of the Presidency of the Republic.

In the cases described above, the new President shall complete the current constitutional term of office.

If the President becomes permanently unavailable to serve during the last two years of his constitutional term of office, the Executive Vice-President shall take over the Presidency of the Republic until such term is completed."

Article 333 states: " This Constitution shall not cease to be in effect if it ceases to be observed due to acts of force or because of repeal in any manner other than as provided for herein. In such eventuality, every citizen, whether or not vested with official authority, has a duty to assist in bringing it back into actual effect."

Article 350 states: "The people of Venezuela, true to their republican tradition and their struggle for independence, peace and freedom, shall disown any regime, legislation or authority that violates democratic values, principles and guarantees or encroaches upon human rights."

Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, available at: https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Venezuela_2009.pdf.

⁵ Miguel A. Camacho, "Estos son los 54 países que reconocen a Guaidó, y que Maduro ignora," *Panam Post*, February 12, 2019, <https://es.panampost.com/miguel-camacho/2019/02/12/paises-reconocen-guaido/?cn-reloaded=1>.

⁶ Gobierno de Perú, "Declaracion del Grupo de Lima: Comunicado Conjunto 004-19," February 4, 2019, <https://www.gob.pe/institucion/rree/noticias/25155-declaracion-del-grupo-de-lima>.

⁷ "ESTATUTO QUE RIDE LA TRANSICIÓN A LA DEMOCRACIA PARA RESTABLECER LA VIGENCIA DE LA CONSTITUCIÓN DE LA REPÚBLICA BOLIVARIANA DE VENEZUELA," Asamblea Nacional, 2019, http://www.asambleanacional.gob.ve/documentos_archivos/estatuto-que-rige-la-transicion-a-la-democracia-para-restablecer-la-vigencia-de-la-constitucion-de-la-republica-bolivariana-de-venezuela-282.pdf.

⁸ See Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, "Democracy and Human Rights in Venezuela," December 30, 2019, <http://www.cidh.org/countryrep/Venezuela2009eng/VE09.TOC.eng.htm>.

⁹ "Leopoldo López cumple cuatro años como preso político de la dictadura de Nicolás Maduro." *Infobae*, February 18, 2018, <https://www.infobae.com/america/venezuela/2018/02/18/leopoldo-lopez-cumple-cuatro-anos-como-preso-politico-de-la-dictadura-de-nicolas-maduro/>; Amnesty International, "Juan Requesens: Un diputado detenido arbitrariamente," August 24, 2018, <https://www.amnistia.org/en/blog/2018/08/7524/juan-requesens-un-diputado-detenido-arbitrariamente>.

¹⁰ "Venezuela: ¿Por qué Capriles fue inhabilitado por 15 años?," *El Comercio*, July 4, 2017, <https://elcomercio.pe/mundo/latinoamerica/venezuela-capriles-inhabilitado-15-anos-413237>.

¹¹ "A Venezuelan Dissident Dies in Custody, and Questions Emerge," *The New York Times*, October 9, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/09/world/americas/venezuela-opposition-death-alban.html>.

¹² "Crackdown on Dissent," *Human Rights Watch*, November 29, 2017, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2017/11/29/crackdown-dissent/brutality-torture-and-political-persecution-venezuela#>.

¹³ Ibis Leon, "Bachelet investiga ejecuciones en Venezuela: Faes asesinó a 242 personas entre 2018 y 2019," *Efecto Cocuyo*, March 20, 2019, <https://www.efectococuyo.com/principales/bachelet-investiga-ejecuciones-en-venezuela-faes-asesino-a-242-personas-entre-2018-y-2019/>.

¹⁴ "Oral update on the situation of human rights in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela," United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, March 20, 2019, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24374&LangID=E>.

¹⁵ César Rojas Angel, "El TSJ de Venezuela declaro "inconstitucional" a la Asamblea Nacional," *France 24*, January 22, 2019, <https://www.france24.com/es/20190122-justicia-inconstitucional-asamblea-nacional-venezuela>.

¹⁶ Nicholas Casey, "Venezuela Reported False Election Turnout, Voting Company Says," *The New York Times*, April 2, 2017 <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/02/world/americas/venezuela-election-turnout.html>.

¹⁷ Patrick Gillespie, "Half the Venezuelan economy has disappeared," *CNN Business*, January 25, 2018, <https://money.cnn.com/2018/01/25/news/economy/venezuela-imf/index.html>.

¹⁸ "República Bolivariana de Venezuela," International Monetary Fund, <https://www.imf.org/en/Countries/VEN>.

¹⁹ Renzo Pipoli, "Venezuela's oil production plunged in February, OPEC says," UPI, March 14, 2019, <https://www.upi.com/Venezuelas-oil-production-plunged-in-February-OPEC-says/3151552568812/>.

²⁰ Susan Schulman, "Hunger and Survival in Venezuela," IRIN, November 21, 2018 <https://www.irinnews.org/special-report/2018/11/21/hunger-and-survival-venezuela>; "Informe Anual | 9 de cada 10 venezolanos no pudieron pagar su alimentación diaria durante 2017," July 2, 2018, <https://www.derechos.org/ve/actualidad/informe-anual-9-de-cada-10-venezolanos-no-pudieron-pagar-su-alimentacion-diaria-durante-2017>.

²¹ "Venezuela: Numbers Highlight Health Crisis," Human Rights Watch, November 15, 2018, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/11/15/venezuela-numbers-highlight-health-crisis>.

²² "Venezuela: Human rights experts say health system in crisis," OHCHR, October 1, 2018, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=23667&LangID=E>.

²³ "Venezuela's Humanitarian Emergency," Human Rights Watch, April 4, 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2019/04/04/venezuelas-humanitarian-emergency/large-scale-un-response-needed-address-health>; "Venezuela: Numbers Highlight Health Crisis," Human Rights Watch, November 15, 2018, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/11/15/venezuela-numbers-highlight-health-crisis>; "WHO: Venezuela malaria cases jump by 69 percent," Aljazeera, April 25, 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/04/venezuela-malaria-cases-jump-69-percent-180424172239443.html>.

²⁴ "Asylum-seekers from Venezuela 2014-2018," UNHCR, January 31, 2019, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/vensit>.

²⁵ Stephanie Nebehay, "Two million more Venezuelans could flee next year: U.N.," Reuters, December 14, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-venezuela-migration/two-million-more-venezuelans-could-flee-next-year-u-n-idUSKBN1OD2CD>.

²⁶ Rachele Krygier and Anthony Faiola, "A humanitarian crisis in Venezuela? Nothing to see here, government says," The Washington Post, October 13, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the_americas/a-humanitarian-crisis-in-venezuela-nothing-to-see-here-government-says/2018/10/12/6ebd1aa6-c2ac-11e8-9451-e878f96be19b_story.html.

²⁷ "IFRC to bring humanitarian aid into Venezuela," International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, March 29, 2019, <https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/press-release/ifrc-bring-humanitarian-aid-venezuela/>; "Gobierno de Maduro autoriza a la Cruz Roja a entregar ayuda humanitaria," El Nuevo Dia, March 29, 2019, <https://www.elnuevodia.com/noticias/mundo/nota/gobiernodemaduroautorizaalacruzrojaentregarayudahumanitaria-2484995/>.

²⁸ "Americas: Weakening democracy and rise in populism hinder anti-corruption efforts," Transparency International, January 29, 2019, <https://www.transparency.org/news/feature/cpi-2018-regional-analysis-americas>.

²⁹ "Rule of Law Index 2019," World Justice Project, https://worldjusticeproject.org/sites/default/files/documents/WJP_RuleofLawIndex_2019_Website_reduced.pdf.

³⁰ David C. Adams, "U.S. sizes up new sanctions on Venezuela over 'blatantly illegal' elections," July 28, 2017, <https://www.univision.com/univision-news/latin-america/us-sizes-up-new-sanctions-on-venezuela-over-blatantly-illegal-elections>.

³¹ Larry Neumeister, "Ex-Venezuelan vice president accused of aiding drug dealers," AP News, March 8, 2019, <https://www.apnews.com/ff89bf5c8f5445fab11e6df6d91640f>.

³² José de Cordoba, "Venezuelan Ex-Treasurer Admits He Took \$1 Billion in Bribes," The Wall Street Journal, November 21, 2018, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/venezuelan-ex-treasurer-admits-he-took-1-billion-in-bribes-154277736>.

³³ "Gold and Grief in Venezuela's Violent South," International Crisis Group, February 28, 2019 <https://www.crisisgroup.org/latin-america-caribbean/andes/venezuela/073-gold-and-grief-venezuelas-violent-south>; Mark Lowen, "Turkey warned over Venezuela gold trade," BBC, February 2, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-47092784>.

³⁴ "Gold and Grief in Venezuela's Violent South," International Crisis Group, February 28, 2019 <https://www.crisisgroup.org/latin-america-caribbean/andes/venezuela/073-gold-and-grief-venezuelas-violent-south>.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Phil Gunson, "The Darkest Hours: Power Outages Raise the Temperature in Venezuela," Crisis Group, March 15, 2019 <https://www.crisisgroup.org/latin-america-caribbean/andes/venezuela/darkest-hours-power-outages-raise-temperature-venezuela>.

³⁷ Mary Beth Sheridan and Marian Zuniga, "Maduro's muscle: Politically backed motorcycle gangs known as 'colectivos' are the enforcers for Venezuela's authoritarian leader," The Washington Post, March 14, 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the_americas/maduros-muscle-politically-backed-motorcycle-gangs-known-as-colectivos-are-the-enforcers-for-venezuelas-authoritarian-leader/2019/03/13/2242068c-4452-11e9-94abd2da3c0df52_story.html?utm_term=.f106eda21e72.

³⁸ Amnesty International, "Juan Requesens: Un diputado detenido arbitrariamente," August 24, 2018, <https://www.amnistia.org/en/blog/2018/08/7524/juan-requesens-un-diputado-detenido-arbitrariamente>.

³⁹ Aaron Karp, "Estimating Global Civilian-Held Firearms," June 2018, Numbers, <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/T-Briefing-Papers/SAS-BP-Civilian-Firearms-Numbers.pdf>, p.3.

⁴⁰ Franco Ordóñez, "Diplomats, Washington skittish on Maduro's downfall in Venezuela," McClatchy DC Bureau, March 29, 2019, <https://www.mcclatchydc.com/news/politics-government/white-house/article228546344.html>; Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and Alastair Smith, "Will Maduro Fall? It depends Who's Getting Paid.," Slate, January 25, 2019, <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2019/01/venezuela-maduro-survives-guaido.amp>

⁴¹ "Constituyente de Maduro le quita inmunidad parlamentaria a Guaidó," El Tiempo, April 2, 2019, <https://www.eltiempo.com/mundo/venezuela/asamblea-constituyente-de-maduro-define-inmunidad-parlamentaria-de-juan-guaido-344994>.

⁴² Constitution, art. 233

⁴³ "El documento completo del Grupo de Lima que eleva al máximo la presión sobre el régimen de Maduro," Infobae, February 25, 2019, <https://www.infobae.com/america/venezuela/2019/02/25/en-vivo-el-grupo-de-lima-eleva-al-maximo-la-presion-sobre-el-regimen-de-maduro/>.

⁴⁴ “Responsibility to Protect,” United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and The Responsibility to Protect, <https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/about-responsibility-to-protect.shtml>.

⁴⁵ See, e.g., “OAS to Host Conference on “The Responsibility to Protect in the Americas”” OAS, March 18, 2019, http://www.oas.org/en/media_center/press_release.asp?sCodigo=AVI-042/19.

⁴⁶ Mark Caputo and Gaby Orr, “Trump: ‘All options are on the table’ for Venezuela,” *POLITICO*, February 2, 2019, <https://www.politico.com/story/2019/02/18/trump-speech-venezuela-1173606>.

⁴⁷ “Briefing With Special Representative for Venezuela Elliott Abrams,” *U.S. Department of State*, March 15, 2019, <https://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2019/03/290416.htm>.

⁴⁸ White House, “Statement by National Security Advisor Ambassador John Bolton,” March 29, 2019, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/statement-national-security-advisor-ambassador-john-bolton-venezuela-2/>.

⁴⁹ Lesley Wroughton and David Brunnstrom, “Pompeo calls on NATO to adapt to new threats from Russia, China,” *Reuters*, April 4, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-nato/pompeo-calls-on-nato-to-adapt-to-new-threats-from-russia-china-idUSKCN1RG1JZ>.

⁵⁰ “Liberan a Juan Guaidó, presidente de la Asamblea Nacional Venezolana,” *El Tiempo*, January 28, 2019, <https://www.eltiempo.com/mundo/venezuela/juan-guaido-fue-detenido-por-el-sebin-y-liberado-un-par-de-horas-despues-314018>.

⁵¹ Daniel Lozano, “El Parlamento venezolano llevará mañana a la cumbre del grupo de Lima el “uso de la fuerza” contra Maduro,” *El Mundo*, February 24, 2019 <https://www.elmundo.es/internacional/2019/02/24/5c71f0cfc6c835c048b45f4.html>.

⁵² Javier Corrales, “How to Tackle Venezuela’s Military Problem,” *The New York Times*, March 4, 2019 <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/04/opinion/venezuela-military-maduro-guaido.html>.

⁵³ Guillermo D. Olmo, “Crisis en Venezuela: qué medios tiene el ejército del país para responder una intervención de EE.UU.,” *BBC*, January 19, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-america-latina-47248371>.

⁵⁴ European Union, “International Contact Group- Meeting 7 February,” February 7, 2019, https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/57788/international-contact-group-%E2%80%937-february_en.

⁵⁵ “Mexico, Uruguay propose 4-stage mechanism for peace in Venezuela,” *Agencia Efe*, February 7, 2019, <https://www.efc.com/efe/english/world/mexico-uruguay-propose-4-stage-mechanism-for-peace-in-venezuela/50000262-3890349>.

⁵⁶ “Rivals rally supporters as Venezuela founders,” March 31, 2019, <https://www.arkansasonline.com/news/2019/mar/31/rivals-rally-supporters-as-venezuela-fo-1/>.

⁵⁷ “Oral update on the situation of human rights in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela,” United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, March 20, 2019, [https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/08/world/americas/venezuela-sanctions-maduro.html](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24374&LangID=E; Anatoly Kurmanav and Clifford Krauss, “U.S. Sanctions Are Aimed at Venezuela’s Oil. Its Citizens May Suffer First.,” <i>New York Times</i>, February 8, 2019, <a href=).

⁵⁸ Karen DeYoung and Anthony Faiola, “As Venezuela’s misery grows, U.S. focus shifts to Cuba’s role,” *The Washington Post*, March 26, 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/as-venezuelas-misery-grows-us-focus-shifts-to-cubas-role/2019/03/26/05fedfa0-4b2c-11e9-b79a-961983b7e0cd_story.html?utm_term=.f0b60c4818cb.

⁵⁹ Mark Lowen, “Turkey warned over Venezuela gold trade,” *BBC*, February 2, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-47092784>.

⁶⁰ Golnar Motevalli and Ladane Nasser, “Iran Slams U.S. Over Venezuela. Secretly, Some May Be Relieved,” *Bloomberg*, February 1, 2019, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-02-01/iran-slams-u-s-over-venezuela-secretly-some-may-be-relieved>.

⁶¹ See footnote 59.

⁶² “China-Latin America Finance Database,” *Inter-American Dialogue*, https://www.thedialogue.org/map_list/; MacKenzie Sigalos, “China and Russia loaned billions to Venezuela- and then the presidency went up for grabs,” *CNBC*, February 7, 2019, <https://www.cnb.com/2019/02/07/venezuela-china-and-russia-owed-debts-as-presidential-fight-rages.html>.

⁶³ “Venezuela’s Guaidó Wants China to See Maduro Is bad for Business,” *Bloomberg*, February 4, 2019 <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-02-04/venezuela-s-guaido-seeks-meeting-with-china-to-relaunch-ties>.

⁶⁴ See Vladimir Rouvinski, “Russian-Venezuelan Relations at a Crossroads,” *Kennan Institute at the Wilson Center*, February, 2019, https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/russia-venezuela_report_rouvinski_final.pdf.

⁶⁵ Mariana Zuniga, Anthony Faiola and Anton Troianovski, “As Maduro confronts a crisis, Russia’s footprint in Venezuela grows,” *The Washington Post*, March 29, 2019, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2019/04/02/trump-has-russia-problem-venezuela/?utm_term=.e4e6233984c8](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the_americas/as-maduro-confronts-a-crisis-russias-footprint-in-venezuela-grows/2019/03/29/fcf93cec-50b3-11e9-bdb7-44f948cc0605_story.html?utm_term=.2fad5f5841c; Ishaan Tharoor, “Trump has a Russia problem in Venezuela,” <i>The Washington Post</i>, April 2, 2019, <a href=).

⁶⁶ Michael Schwartz, “Russia Blocks Venezuela Measure at U.N. Calling It a U.S. Ploy for Regime Change,” *The New York Times*,” February 28, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/28/world/americas/russia-venezuela-veto-united-nations.html>.

⁶⁷ Peter Richards, “Canada Facilitates Meeting Between CARICOM And Venezuela’s Opposition Leader,” *PRIDE*, March 29, 2019, <http://pridenews.ca/2019/03/24/canada-facilitates-meeting-caricom-venezuelas-opposition-leader/>.

⁶⁸ Jacqueline Charles, “Caribbean Leaders meet with Trump, say he promises renewed U.S. engagement in region,” *Miami Herald*, March 22, 2019, <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/nation-world/world/americas/haiti/article228268794.html>.

⁶⁹ “Maduro cierra fronteras para bloquear ayuda humanitaria,” *El País*, February 22, 2019, <https://www.elpais.com.uy/mundo/maduro-cierra-fronteras-bloquear-ayuda-humanitaria.html>.

⁷⁰ European Union, “International Contact Group on Venezuela: Ministerial Declaration,” March 28, 2019, <https://eeas.europa.eu/>

headquarters/headquarters-homepage/60358/international-contact-group-venezuela-ministerial-declaration_en.

⁷¹ Will Grant, “Entrevista de Juan Guaidó con la BBC: “Ninguno de los organismos de seguridad que el gobierno controla se han atrevido a apresarme,”” BBC, March 14, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-america-latina-47573763>.

⁷² See Frank Mora, “What a Military Intervention in Venezuela Would Look Like,” *Foreign Affairs*, March 19, 2019, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/venezuela/2019-03-19/what-military-intervention-venezuela-would-look>.

⁷³ “Grupo de Lima reitera apoyo activo al pueblo de Venezuela y a Juan Guaidó,” *El Universo*, February 25, 2019, <https://www.eluniverso.com/noticias/2019/02/25/nota/7207424/grupo-lima-discute-acciones-contra-regimen-nicolas-maduro>.

⁷⁴ See footnote 71.

⁷⁵ Francisco Alfaro Pareja, “Mecanismos alternativos de diálogo y negociación en el conflicto político de Venezuela (2002-2018),” *CRIES*, <http://www.cries.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/007-Alfaro.pdf>.

⁷⁶ Eric Brahm, “Hurting Stalemate Stage,” *Beyond Intractability*, September, 2003, <https://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/stalemate>.

⁷⁷ “U.S. envoy Abrams met secretly with Venezuela foreign minister: AP report,” *Reuters*, February 14, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-venezuela-politics-abrams/u-s-envoy-abrams-met-secretly-with-venezuela-foreign-minister-ap-report-idUSKCN1Q405G>.

⁷⁸ Karl Ritter, “US, Russia divided on Venezuela after talks in Rome,” *AP*, March 19, 2019, <https://www.apnews.com/0a83ab2e-80964c97af9facfd02b0068e>.

⁷⁹ “Venezuela’s Humanitarian Emergency,” *Human Rights Watch*, April 4, 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2019/04/04/venezuela-humanitarian-emergency/large-scale-un-response-needed-address-health>.

⁸⁰ Michael J. Camilleri and Fen Osler Hampson, “No Strangers at the Gate,” *Inter-American Dialogue and Center for International Governance Innovation*, October, 2018, <https://www.thedialogue.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/NoStrangersatGate.pdf>.

⁸¹ “IFRC to bring humanitarian aid into Venezuela,” *IFRC*, March 29, 2019, <https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/press-release/ifrc-bring-humanitarian-aid-venezuela/>.

⁸² See footnote 79.

⁸³ “Oral update on the situation of human rights in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela,” *United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner*, March 20, 2019, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24374&LangID=E>.

⁸⁴ Cancillería de Colombia, “Declaración del Grupo de Lima en apoyo al proceso de transición democrática y la reconstrucción de Venezuela,” February 25, 2019, <https://www.cancilleria.gov.co/newsroom/news/declaracion-grupo-lima-apoyo-proceso-transicion-democratica-reconstruccion-venezueohla>.

⁸⁵ Javier Corrales, “How to Tackle Venezuela’s Military Problem,” *The New York Times*, March 4, 2019 <https://nyti.ms/2GYOvqA?smid=nytcore-ios-share>.

About the Peter D. Bell Rule of Law Program

Established in 2015 with support from the Ford Foundation and named in honor of a founding Dialogue co-chair, the Peter D. Bell Rule of Law Program aims to elevate policy discussions around corruption and transparency, democracy and human rights, and citizen security in Latin America.



www.thedialogue.org

Inter-American Dialogue
1155 15th St. NW, Suite 800 Washington, DC 20005
Tel: 202-822-9002