

How to make Maduro's grip on power unsustainable?

Antonio De La Cruz

Executive Director

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On July 28, 2024, millions of Venezuelans cast their votes in an act of civic defiance. The message was clear: Nicolás Maduro lost. And yet, six months later, his regime remains in power, clinging to a system of repression and illicit financing that has turned Venezuela into a pariah state.

Many ask why, if the people have already spoken, change has not come. The answer is simple, yet harsh: for an authoritarian regime to fall, the cost of staying in power must exceed the benefits of holding on to it. Until that tipping point is reached, Maduro and his inner circle will remain entrenched.

For democratic forces and the international community, merely denouncing the regime's illegitimacy is not enough. The real challenge is to make its survival untenable.

A Crossroads: Confrontation or perpetuation

1. Maduro has managed to survive because he has maintained a delicate balance of diplomatic isolation. The United States, Europe, and Latin America must send a unified message: Maduro will never be recognized as legitimate. Sanctions should not be a mere tool of leverage, but a state policy with direct economic consequences.
2. Sustained internal resistance. The opposition must operate with a silent but expansive grassroots network that does not rely solely on public protests but rather on systematic disruption that limits the regime's operational capacity.
3. Undermining military cohesion. So far, the armed forces have remained neutral. But their dilemma is clear: continue backing a collapsing regime or secure a role in Venezuela's future. The opposition must target efforts at fracturing military loyalty to Maduro.

These elements are not isolated tactics. They must function as part of a comprehensive strategy.

The time to act is now

Maduro is playing for time. His bet is straightforward: wear down internal resistance and wait for the international community to lose interest. Every day without increased pressure is another day his regime consolidates its hold.

But his margin for maneuver is shrinking. Venezuela's economic crisis is deepening—in 2024, the national currency lost 31% of its value, and the IMF projects 72% inflation for 2025—while sanctions have reduced his ability to maneuver, and cracks within the ruling PSUV party are widening.

The key question is no longer if the regime will fall, but rather when and under what conditions.

The outcome is not yet written, but the lesson is clear: authoritarian regimes do not collapse on their own. They fall when staying in power becomes impossible.

Which is why it is urgent to raise the cost for Maduro—before it's too late.