

Maduro at the brink: the unthinkable is now inevitable

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There was a time when the fall of Nicolás Maduro’s regime seemed improbable—an elusive dream nurtured by the Venezuelan opposition and its international allies. But history and politics follow their own logic: what once appeared unthinkable is now taking shape as an inevitable reality.

In political theory, the Overton Window describes how ideas once considered extreme can gradually become mainstream policy. In Venezuela’s case, this window has shifted significantly in recent years, particularly in the foreign policy calculus of the United States and its allies. What was once dismissed as hyperbole—the regime’s entanglement with drug trafficking and organized crime—is now a well-documented reality.

From conjecture to evidence

Reports from the FBI, DEA, and U.S. Department of Justice have confirmed what was long dismissed as conspiracy theory: the *Cartel de los Soles* (*Cartel of the Suns*), a network of senior military officials within the Venezuelan regime, functions as a transnational criminal enterprise. The Trump administration previously highlighted these connections by placing multimillion-dollar bounties on key figures. Now, there is a more structured international effort to address the issue.

Recent cocaine seizures in the Caribbean, traced back to Venezuela, and the arrests of operatives linked to the regime have strengthened the perception that Maduro is not merely leading an authoritarian government but heading a hemispheric security threat. Washington no longer debates *whether* Maduro is a dictator or a criminal kingpin, but *how* to respond to his regime.

This shift in perception has profoundly altered political discourse in both the U.S. and Latin America. The Overton Window has moved decisively on key issues:

Issue	Previous Position	Current Position
Regime’s ties to drug trafficking	Considered a fringe theory.	Broadly accepted and documented.
Military intervention in Venezuela	Unthinkable or unacceptable.	Debated in some political circles.
Recognition of the	A radical option.	Endorsed by multiple

Issue	Previous Position	Current Position
opposition as legitimate government		governments and international bodies: Edmundo González Urrutia is recognized as the elected president.
Regime’s classification as a dictatorship	Subject to debate.	Categorized as such by international organizations.
International sanctions	Controversial due to their impact on civilians.	Widely accepted as a diplomatic tool.
Regime isolation	A contested strategy.	A growing international policy.

A Cabello-Madurismo in terminal decline?

One of the most significant shifts is the perception of *Cabello-Madurismo* as a sustainable system. For years, it was assumed that Maduro’s grip on the military and his repressive apparatus ensured long-term stability. Today, that assumption appears increasingly fragile.

Reports detailing the vast fortunes amassed by the regime’s inner circle—Diosdado Cabello, Vladimir Padrino López, Nicolás Maduro, and Cilia Flores—show that *Cabello-Madurismo* is not a cohesive ideological movement but a criminal syndicate vulnerable to internal betrayal. When high-ranking officials start negotiating their exits with Washington, the house of cards could collapse.

At the same time, international pressure is intensifying. Leaders like Nayib Bukele, Javier Milei, and María Corina Machado are shaping a new geopolitical landscape that further constricts the regime’s options. Economic sanctions and diplomatic isolation are eroding Maduro’s room for maneuver. The notion that Chavismo will survive the decade is no longer a certainty—it is now a shifting geopolitical calculation.

Military intervention? Once unthinkable, now up for debate

In 2019, when Donald Trump floated the possibility of military intervention in Venezuela, most analysts dismissed it as bluster. Today, the landscape has changed. While direct intervention remains an extreme option, it is no longer a taboo subject in U.S. national security circles.

Iran’s growing influence in Venezuela, the presence of ELN and Hezbollah cells in the country, and the ongoing territorial dispute with Guyana have turned Venezuela into a hemispheric security risk. A military conflict with Guyana over the Essequibo region could accelerate a more aggressive response from Washington, fundamentally altering the regional landscape.

When the unthinkable becomes inevitable

The Overton Window does not shift by accident—it moves in response to events, political decisions, and changes in public perception. In Venezuela’s case, the global conversation is no longer about *whether* Maduro is a dictator or a criminal. The question now is whether his downfall will come through economic pressure, internal betrayal, or direct international action.

The next shift in the Overton Window could involve even more drastic measures: covert operations, harsher sanctions, or even military intervention. When the unthinkable becomes inevitable, the real question is not *if* Maduro will fall—but *when*.