

Shift in perception of the venezuelan opposition: from radical to assertive

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This Monday, October 2nd, the National Primary Commission and the 13 contenders from Venezuela's democratic forces reaffirmed October 22nd as the date for selecting the united presidential candidate for 2024. It came in response to the new National Electoral Council's proposal to postpone the election to November 19th to facilitate voting centers, machines, and other things.

"The current situation greatly differs from what we faced on June 5th... when there was a persistent push to define primary conditions so our candidates could register knowing the structure of the process, whether it would be manual voting or the automated system of the CNE", mentioned the commission in a statement led by Jesús María Casal.

Nicolás Maduro's regime has misinterpreted the electoral solution to Venezuela's political crisis. The forced resignation of the electoral entity's directors, linked to the ruling party and the functional opposition in June, as well as maneuverings through disqualifications, the resignation of some members of the CNP, and coercion methods applied to pre-candidates, members of the commission, and heads of electoral centers, are now viewed as radical by a significant portion of the population.

Similarly, the self-managed primary measures with manual voting proposed by the democratic forces, which might have once been seen as radical, are now perceived as assertive or common sense.

What once worked for the regime –disqualifying candidates and picking their opposition in past elections– is no longer politically acceptable to the majority. It's rejected by 8 out of 10 Venezuelans, according to recent public opinion studies.

Suppose Maduro and his allies continue to hinder the popular expression represented by the primary. In that case, the regime will find itself socially isolated, pushing democratic forces to devise ways to attain freedom and live in democracy.

Isolation is an option for the Maduro regime through their Supreme Court of Justice, a tactic recently employed by Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua and the Cuban regime for over 60 years. However, such a decision would put them at odds with democracies like the US, the UK, the European Union, and even allies such as Colombia and Brazil, who try to vouch for them. It's

essential not to forget that the International Criminal Court continues to document crimes against humanity committed by the Venezuelan government. Any new human rights violations due to increased repression to remain in power will not go unnoticed. The people desire change and will peacefully demand their right to choose in a semi-free, fair, competitive, and verifiable process who will lead the country in the coming six years.

With this scenario, Maduro's regime invokes the "external enemy" narrative to avoid electoral confrontation. They hope this will help them maintain power and further control the population.

At the IX Puebla Group Meeting, Delcy Rodríguez – a key figure in Madurismo – alleged that "the Southern Command sees [Guyana] as an excellent territory to attack Venezuela".

They intend to divert people's attention from corruption issues and have them forget that it's "not a blockade, it's a plunder" from the UN's Independent Mission report on human rights violations and the ongoing economic crisis. Within a year, the bolivar has depreciated by 320% against the dollar. Nationalism has also been an excuse to justify repressive actions that silence opponents, branding them "traitors" or "foreign agents", legitimizing Maduro's leadership as crucial for the country's survival. Controlling the Armed Forces and security forces becomes vital for retaining power. They further justify emergency measures in the name of national defense to enforce martial laws, restrict freedoms, censor independent media online, and conduct arrests without due process.

However, such tactics won't keep the regime in power, as the cons outweigh the pros.

Isolation is their worst option, as the current benefits available for negotiating a democratic way out of Venezuela's crisis would vanish personally and economically for the regime.

Presently, Maduro has several options to facilitate a democratic transition in Venezuela, benefiting both him and his cronies.

There is a change in the political perception of the opposition in Venezuela: from radical to assertive, which we all must know how to read to achieve the peaceful exit of a free, fair, competitive, and verifiable presidential election in 2024- that most Venezuelans want—an unwavering wish.