

Venezuela 2019: The struggle for democracy

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The events in 2019 will be decisive for the permanence of the Nicolas Maduro regime in power. The scenarios presented by *The Economist*, other analysts and Inter American Trends predict his departure from the presidency of Venezuela. It will depend on the alignment of strategy and actions between international and internal factors.

The Economist in its edition *The World in 2019: The World in Numbers* states "The president Nicolas Maduro retains power through oil-fuelled patronage- the network" of governments resulting from oil diplomacy and illicit businesses, "but dwindling production and a collapsing economy mean his time is running out. A pragmatic faction within the ruling Venezuelan United Socialist Party of Venezuela will select a new leader and seek international financial assistance in return for orthodox reforms. The shift should stem the economic collapse, but the decline will be slowed rather than reversed".

The leading indicators of the Venezuelan economy predicted by the British magazine are devastating for 2019. GDP per capita will be 2,280 dollars. This will place Venezuela among the 24 most miserable countries in the world, among which are: Mali, Rwanda, Guinea, Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Guinea Bissau, Haiti, Gambia, among others. The same applies to the GDP (PPP), which will be 10,090 dollars. And as for GDP, the recession will continue for the fifth consecutive year, standing at 5.9%.

Other analysts forecast that the scenario for Venezuela in 2019 includes: a deepening economic chaos, with hyperinflation reaching unimaginable levels; a stagnation of oil production in more or less 1 million barrels per day; a collapse of the state oil company Pdvsa with the privatization of its own production areas and the loss of Citgo; an increase in migration that goes beyond the governments capacity in the region; and a recession that continues to reduce the production of goods and services. These will force a negotiated agreement within the Chavism bloc (PSUV) defeating Maduro and installing a more moderate and pragmatic government.

In order to be accomplished, these two scenarios need some form of negotiated foreign assistance, in which the main actors are: the Boston Group, Mexico, the Vatican and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, among others.

A third scenario of Inter American Trends for Venezuela in 2019 includes: an economic and social collapse; a complex humanitarian emergency and a massive refugee and migrant crisis; a vacuum of power due to the non-recognition of the presidential election of May 20, 2018 by the National Assembly of Venezuela, the Group of Lima, the United States, the European Union and Japan; and a constitutional crisis. Given the lack of legitimacy of Nicolas Maduro to assume the presidency of the Republic for the period 2019-2025, the president of the Legislative Power is sworn in on an interim basis and forms a transitional government until the rescue of the functionality of the State, and a new presidential election takes place.

This scenario is facilitated by the President of the National Assembly and the opposition deputies, the Supreme Court of Justice and the Attorney General of the Republic in exile, civil society, the parties of the Democratic Unity Table, the Frente Amplio, the Episcopal Conference of Venezuela, the business associations and chambers, the Secretary General of the OAS, the Lima Group, the United States, the European Union, and the diaspora, among others.

The three scenarios present the departure of Nicolas Maduro from power. In the first two, the transition is within Chavism, and the democratic forces lead the last one.

Nicolas Maduro must have his scenario: that he stays until 2025. The blindness of power will lead him to his final destination, the exit from power. However, if Maduro manages to survive 2019, he will enforce greater human suffering to the people of Venezuela, because it will impose savage repression against the civilian population that demands a free, just and dignified life. This possible event is the main reason why we have to fight to achieve the third scenario: Democracy Now.