

## **Why does Nicolás Maduro confiscate the democratic parties in Venezuela?**

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The political fight between de facto president Nicolás Maduro and acting president Juan Guaidó is at the point of maximum pressure. Maduro uses the electoral tactic of competitive authoritarianism. At the same time, Guaidó counts on the maximum application of the sanctions imposed by the Trump administration on the Bolivarian regime. The contest has intensified to the point that it has turned Venezuela into a toxic country. Only a government-sanctioned by the United States can help this administration, as is the case of Iran, which will see Venezuela's position deteriorate even further if it continues to strengthen ties against Uncle Sam. Hence, Venezuela links to a state that sponsors and funds Islamic terrorism has unpredictable consequences for any administration in the United States due to the immediate threat to American security.

On the other hand, Maduro and Guaidó consider the United States' presidential elections this November 3 as a determining milestone in the continuation or change in the exercise of power. The result will influence the Venezuelan political outcome. Four more years of Trump could lead to the collapse of the criminal structures that support Maduro. A contrary result, a Democratic victory, would open up the possibility of not questioning Maduro's illegitimate presidency.

Right now, polls give candidate Joe Biden the nod as favorite to win the United States election, like they did Hillary Clinton in the 2016 election. Trump's win is an uphill battle, so he depends on a special as-yet-unforeseen event that will allow him to reverse the result since the electoral campaign is not fully implemented.

In the scenario of a Trump victory, Maduro will use the parliamentary elections to end 60 countries' recognition of Juan Guaidó as interim President of Venezuela. For this purpose, he will use the Supreme Court of Justice, which will complete the restructuring of the new electoral process already underway.

The first thing that the Supreme Court did was to appoint the members of the electoral branch on June 12, declaring a legislative omission in the appointment of the board of directors of the National Electoral Council (CNE in Spanish). It was the fifth time in the last 20 years that the judiciary and not the National Assembly (AN in Spanish) elected CNE's councilors.

The immediate step of the Supreme Court was to suspend the democratic parties' committees that make up the parliamentary majority of the National Assembly, appoint an ad hoc board of directors "to carry forward the restructuring process" of the political organizations. The new committee is chaired by a party leader who is an ally of Maduro. And the rest of the board is made up of other party members who are not currently prominent in their organizations. They

will be in charge of appointing the regional, municipal, and local authorities of each political party.

Maduro seeks to ensure that Acción Democrática, Primero Justicia, Voluntad Popular, and Un Nuevo Tiempo (known collectively as G4) participate in the National Assembly election. It would make a semblance of a competitive and democratic ballot and assure the end of the international recognition of the Guaidó interim government.

The new management of the democratic parties will require resources to race in the parliamentary election. An electoral campaign for a candidate to enter Parliament should cost between 40,000 and 100,000 dollars, depending on the electoral circuit. If we take into account that in 2015, 113 deputies were elected directly and 51 enlisted, each political organization will require a minimum of 6 million dollars to compete against the government machinery. This money would come from corruption or illegal activities such as drug trafficking and money laundering.

Alberto Federico Ravell, a journalist, published an internal note in WhatsApp on June 18 that in the coming days, the CNE will change the electoral system, reversing the number of deputies elected uninominally and by list to a new ratio of 40% and 60% respectively. Besides, the CNE will increase the number of deputies per electorate and create an additional national constituency. All these arrangements are so that the 2015 electoral results are not repeated. Furthermore, it would favor the appointment of deputy candidates by the G4 parties' new management.

Maduro needs a new National Assembly as soon as possible to seek investments from China and Russia that have put the requirement of Parliament's approval into new contracts in the areas of hydrocarbons, electricity, mining, telecommunications, and the like—that is, the privatization of the Venezuela economy. Without these revenues, his regime's future would be compromised because the United States sanctions would continue with either a Trump or Biden administration.

Furthermore, once this model is consolidated, the former leaders without their political party will be isolated and reduced to lonely voices, with little resonance within Venezuela and, over time, abroad.

For this reason, Maduro confiscates the G4 political parties in Venezuela.