



Photo credit: Venezuelan opposition rallies in favor of the humanitarian aid to be delivered at several border crossings: Rubén Alfonzo, Shutterstock, December 2019.

Lost in Fragmentation?

The Recurrent Dilemmas of the Venezuelan Opposition and What to Do Next¹

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Authoritarian regimes around the world share the ambition of holding onto power for as long as possible. To do so, they need to neutralize internal and external threats, meaning groups within and outside the ruling coalition with the capacity to overthrow them.² Opposition parties typically belong to the latter group of “threats” that autocrats must manage or suppress to guarantee their survival. How regimes accomplish this can differ, but some common tactics include cooptation, repression, or other “divide and conquer” mechanisms, including the provision of spoils. Inducing oppositions to fragment, in fact, seems crucial, as research has shown that coordinated oppositions can be more successful in triggering liberalization and/or regime change. In other words, when autocrats succeed in dividing the opposition, they also reduce the probabilities of change. Accordingly, one crucial strategic choice among opposition groups is to avoid fragmentation and facilitate coordination that increases their effectiveness in challenging an authoritarian regime.

At times, the Venezuelan opposition understood the strategic and symbolic need for cooperation. Over the past two decades, various parties and nonpartisan groups have created different platforms aimed at ousting Hugo Chávez (1999-2013) and later, his successor, Nicolás Maduro (2013-present). These groupings have included the Coordinadora Democrática (CD), the Mesa de la Unidad Democrática (MUD), Frente Amplio Venezuela

¹ I would like to thank Cindy Arnson, Michael Penfold and Guillermo T. Aveledo for their valuable comments and suggestions on previous drafts.

² Milan Svobik, *The Politics of Authoritarian Rule* (Cambridge University Press, 2012).



Libre (FAVL), and the Plataforma Unitaria. Nonetheless, Venezuela's opposition groups have also gone through periods of fragmentation. Why has the Venezuelan opposition gone through cycles of division and unity? And most importantly, is there a way to make the opposition a force capable of producing political change?

Opposition Coordination – The Why, When, and How

Political oppositions to contemporary (electoral) authoritarian regimes face a myriad of dilemmas. They must constantly think about whether to participate or boycott elections in light of unfair and restrictive conditions; how to organize and mobilize constituents in a hostile and often dangerous environment; whether to cooperate with other opposition groups or to strategize alone; and how to balance international support for a democratizing cause with the often delicate and complex dynamics on the ground, all of this, while facing harassment, persecution, exile, or jail.

Scholars of comparative democratization and authoritarianism have been paying more attention to the role oppositions play in non-democratic contexts. In recent years, scholarly work on opposition coordination has been growing. Researchers have identified a number of explanations for why opposition parties do not always coordinate their actions in non-democracies. These reasons include institutional factors, such as electoral rules or

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constitutional design, as well as autocrats' pre-electoral promises; ideological or personal rivalries; internal commitment problems; probabilities of regime transition; or the economic performance of the authoritarian incumbent.³ By focusing on levels of repression, my own work adds yet another variable to explain why oppositions often fail to coordinate. My work argues that when repression is low, parties often lack incentives to cooperate.

They will pursue their own goals because they do not feel sufficiently threatened. When repression is intermediate, parties tend to coordinate and form a coalition and finally, when repression is high, opposition elites tend to fragment again, forced to devote their energies to individual

³ Jennifer Gandhi, "Coordination among Opposition Parties in Authoritarian Elections" (Princeton, N.J., April 25, 2008); Elvin Ong, "Opposition Coordination in Singapore's 2015 General Elections," *The Round Table* 105, no. 2 (March 3, 2016): 185–94; Orçun Selçuk and Dilara Hekimci, "The Rise of the Democracy – Authoritarianism Cleavage and Opposition Coordination in Turkey (2014–2019)," *Democratization*, August 10, 2020, 1–19; Michael Wahman, "Offices and Policies – Why Do Oppositional Parties Form Pre-Electoral Coalitions in Competitive Authoritarian Regimes?" *Electoral Studies* 30, no. 4 (December 1, 2011): 642–57; Nicolas van de Walle, "Tipping Games: When Do Opposition Parties Coalesce?" in Andreas Schedler, *Electoral Authoritarianism: The Dynamics of Unfree Competition* (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2006).



Photo credit: Demonstrators rally in support of EU's decision to recognize Venezuela's National Assembly, President Juan Guaidó, as the Interim President: Rubén Alfonso, Shutterstock, February 2019.

safety and survival rather than collective gains, which seem difficult to achieve under prevailing conditions.⁴

Additionally, it is important to consider not only whether oppositions coordinate, but also *how* they coordinate. Evidence from the Venezuelan case demonstrates how “formal” coordination—that is, coordination agreements that rely on clear decision-making rules and conflict resolution mechanisms—can be more effective than “informal” ones, which lack formal rules.⁵ While the most obvious example of the former would be an electoral coalition, the latter might consist of occasional round tables, cross-party endorsements, and collective protests. Formal coordination can—in theory, and, depending on other factors—increase the opposition’s effectiveness when challenging an autocrat, because shared internal mechanisms for strategy-formation can control politicians or parties’ ambitions to break away to pursue individual goals. Formal coordination appears to be particularly important before or after even partial victories, such as success in legislative, local, or regional elections, when leaders and parties might feel that sharing power and victories among coalition members might no longer be worth the costs.

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⁴ Maryhen Jiménez, “Contesting Autocracy: Opposition Coordination and Repression in Venezuela,” *Political Studies*, May 2021, 1–22.

⁵ *Ibid.*

Previous and Current Coordination Efforts in Venezuela

In Venezuela, opposition parties have at times coordinated their actions to face *chavismo* collectively; they have done so informally through the CD and formally around the MUD. But the opposition has also gone through long periods of fragmentation. Why has this been the case?

There is no single answer to this complex question. But it appears that ideological differences, personal rivalries, divergent strategic preferences, commitment to democratic values, and levels of repression have influenced opposition groups' incentives to coordinate. Broadly speaking, there have been two major camps within the opposition during the past two decades: those who believe(d) in the homemade "electoral way out," and those who want(ed) to oust *chavismo* "through whatever means necessary," even if this involved a forceful exit. Since the early 2000s there has been a fundamental cleavage between groups who prefer to boycott elections, betting on a strategy of regime collapse through mass mobilization and/or international pressure, and those who have believed in accumulating power by organizing discontented Venezuelans around a programmatic and electoral exit. This internal cleavage grew deeper over time as *chavismo* became more repressive, thereby contributing to further opposition fragmentation.

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There was, however, a significant period during which opposition parties formally coordinated their actions through the MUD and, consequently, began to challenge *chavismo* more effectively in the electoral arena. One of the reasons that the MUD—with all its flaws—was successful was because it counted on clear mechanisms for decision making, which helped mitigate internal conflicts. Beyond these internal rules, the MUD also established an

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"executive secretariat" as well as working commissions to aid in the collective process of strategy formation. The MUD alliance helped the opposition in several ways: 1) it mitigated personal ambitions for power; 2) it provided structure, programmatic ideas, and a clear plan for action; 3) it sent a signal of coherence and

viability to the population; and 4) it challenged *chavismo* more effectively at the polls. It was, in fact, under the MUD that the opposition achieved its unexpected supermajority in the 2015 legislative elections.⁶

⁶ Ibid.

Prior or subsequent platforms to the MUD, such as the CD or FAVL, did not have formal internal rules to facilitate decision making, strategy formation, or conflict resolution. In the latter two coordination efforts, the most powerful actors imposed their decisions and strategic preferences on the weaker ones. In the CD, the private sector had the upper hand over political parties and civil society groups, whereas in the FAVL, political parties led the strategy-formation process. Within these alliances, weaker or disadvantaged members in terms of resources or popular support legitimized collective decisions made by the more powerful entities.

Yet, if the MUD was the most successful opposition alliance until 2015, why did it disappear? Of the many explanations, I will focus on two. On the one hand, Maduro's government responded with increased repression aimed at exacerbating internal divisions and weakening a new incoming opposition-led National Assembly. Furthermore, Maduro's almost immediate response to this electoral setback was to establish an all-powerful parallel National Constituent Assembly (NCA), led by the vice-president of the ruling Socialist Party (PSUV), Diosdado Cabello, to write a new constitution. In practice, however, between 2017 and 2020, the NCA worked as a de facto pro-government legislative body, which passed electoral,

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administrative, and legislative rules that further undermined fundamental freedoms.⁷

On the other hand, however, a misinterpretation of its 2015 success also contributed to opposition fragmentation. The unexpected victory in the legislative elections allowed for internal divisions

to flourish once again: individual leaders and parties believed that, given the landslide electoral success, a regime collapse was imminent; thus, coordinating and sharing gains with other MUD members seemed no longer necessary. This attitude, in turn, allowed for existing cleavages and ambitions regarding who would lead a transition to democracy to reemerge. Instead of holding onto the alliance for collective strategy formation and carefully crafting a transition to democracy through the newly-won National Assembly, parties and leaders focused on how to promote their preferred strategy for transition: a constitutional reform, recall referendum, or a call for Maduro's immediate resignation. Existing divisions along strategic lines were particularly evident in the snap presidential election held in May 2018, when Henri Falcón, a former *chavista* and governor of Lara (2008-17), ran as an opposition candidate, while the rest of the opposition chose to boycott.⁸

Opposition fragmentation has continued to be a major obstacle in the pursuit of change ever since. In addition to the regime's increased coercive repression of the opposition, anti-*chavista* groups have not dealt effectively with internal dilemmas and cleavages. In fact, it

⁷ International Commission of Jurists, "No Room for Debate The National Constituent Assembly and the Crumbling of the Rule of Law in Venezuela" (Geneva, 2019), <https://www.icj.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Venezuela-No-room-for-debate-Publications-Reports-Fact-finding-mission-reports-2019-ENG.pdf>.

⁸ Maryhen Jiménez and Antulio Rosales, "To Boycott or Not to Boycott Elections in Non-Democracies – Lessons from Venezuela," *Mischiefs of Faction*, December 17, 2020, <https://www.mischiefsoffaction.com/post/to-boycott-or-not-to-boycott-elections-in-non-democracies-lessons-from-venezuela>.





Photo credit: Protest in Caracas against the government of Nicolás Maduro: Reynaldo Riobueno, Shutterstock, April 2017.

appears that the interim government established in January 2019, led by National Assembly president Juan Guaidó, could itself have contributed in several ways to the impediment of a transition. First, Guaidó’s claim to be Venezuela’s legitimate president while also being an opposition leader created key challenges. Guaidó was unable to govern in any real sense of the word and could not impact people’s dire living conditions. His popularity declined

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dramatically between 2019 and 2021, dipping as low as 25 percent in April 2021.⁹ Though the interim government indicated a willingness to help finance the acquisition of COVID-19 vaccines and offered three-month payments of \$100 for medical staff during 2020, it was unable to provide meaningful solutions to the population’s extensive material needs. In addition, the strategic path to a transition under Guaidó’s leadership was not always consistent: he aligned the opposition with the “maximum pressure” approach of the Trump administration, invoking the increased use of sanctions in the hopes that external pressure would lead to internal regime collapse (through defections or splits in the armed forces) or to massive social unrest, while also being open to a negotiated transition facilitated by foreign actors. However, the strong emphasis on the role of external actors meant that the Guaidó-led opposition failed to focus on 1) strengthening clear and transparent collective decision making and action within the opposition; and 2) creating stronger linkages with the population, independent civil society organizations, and

⁹ Manuel Tomillo, “Datanálisis: Más Del 62 % de Los Venezolanos No Está Ni Con Guaidó Ni Con Maduro,” *Efecto Cocuyo*, November 22, 2020, <https://efectococuyo.com/politica/datanalisis-mas-del-62-de-los-venezolanos-no-esta-ni-con-guaido-ni-con-maduro/>.

discontented *chavistas*.¹⁰ In a nutshell, the interim government could not solve internal opposition dilemmas and has not represented an efficient body for inclusive coordination and decision making.

Consequently, today, the opposition that previously convened via the CD or MUD, appears to be splintered into four subgroups or factions: 1) a minimalist “systemic opposition” that is willing to co-exist with the authoritarian regime; 2) a maximalist group of politicians who have openly asked for foreign military intervention; 3) a moderate but seemingly unorganized opposition willing to contest elections if the regime makes significant liberalizing concessions; and 4) the mainstream opposition organized around the interim government led by Juan Guaidó and backed by the United States, Canada, and several European and Latin American countries.¹¹ The latter group had largely hoped that the international community would facilitate a transition to democracy through external pressure.

A Path Forward

One of the crucial questions for democratic oppositions facing serious constraints concerns what to do to challenge non-democratic regimes more effectively, particularly when incumbents

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are willing to use the coercive state apparatus to shut down democratization efforts. There is no single, magic recipe for how to best oppose autocrats; and opposition movements around the world are still learning which strategies can help liberalize and/or democratize their countries. Yet, based on evidence from the Venezuelan case, it seems crucial to acknowledge that institutional and electoral

strategies have so far been more constructive in strategic terms than extra-institutional and maximalist mechanisms. For democratic opposition groups to be successful in their goal to restore democracy to Venezuela, they should consider several premises.

Coordinate Around Specific Goals and Internal Rules

Given the existing degrees of fragmentation among the most significant actors in the Venezuelan opposition, a broad-based coordination agreement may no longer be possible or desirable. It is possible that, by now, different ideological or competing strategic visions are irreconcilable. In my previous work, I have argued that there are, in fact, certain windows of opportunity for broad-based, formal coordination efforts such as the MUD; due to current high levels of repression and subsequent internal opposition dilemmas, this route may now be

¹⁰ Antulio Rosales and Maryhen Jiménez, “Venezuela: Autocratic Consolidation and Splintered Economic Liberalization,” *Revista de Ciencia Política*, Vol. 41, No. 2, August 2021, 425-447, <http://ojs.uc.cl/index.php/rcp/article/view/40315/32329>.

¹¹ Following the fraudulent 2021 legislative election in Venezuela and presidential transitions in some European and Latin American countries, the number of nations recognizing Guaidó’s interim government has diminished.

closed. Visibly and actively coordinating actions in the short-term entail significant risks. The Maduro government has low approval rates and Venezuelans continue to have a strong desire for change. If all or most opposition groups succeeded in presenting an attractive alternative, it could threaten the ruling coalition's hold on power, possibly resulting in (even) more repressive behavior. This is so because repression and coordination can reinforce each other.¹²

Of course, this does not mean that oppositions should not work together; they should. However, coordination efforts should be embedded in a realistic understanding of time horizons as well as of ruling elites' interests, resources, and weakness. Moreover, coordination might be more feasible and productive if it is pursued by groups that share a strategic vision that prioritizes electoral democratization and re-institutionalization over violent and extra-institutional means. Those groups should elaborate clear mechanisms for decision making and conflict resolution so that more durable cooperation can be achieved.

Understand Current Constraints

The country's situation has dramatically changed since 2019. The living conditions of Venezuelans constitute a humanitarian emergency.¹³ According to the recently published National Survey on the Living Conditions of the Venezuelan Population (ENCOVI) 94.5 percent of surveyed households live in poverty (measured by income), while 76.6 percent do so in extreme poverty.¹⁴ Power outages, cuts in water supplies, and shortages of food, clean drinking water, and medical supplies continue to severely impact the full exercise of people's rights.¹⁵ In short, Venezuela is suffering extremely high levels of poverty, inequality, economic contraction, and state fragility that need to be addressed urgently. These variables affect democratization processes, including the opposition's capacity to organize and

¹² Jiménez, "Contesting Autocracy."

¹³ HRW, "Venezuela's Humanitarian Emergency," Human Rights Watch, April 4, 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2019/04/04/venezuelas-humanitarian-emergency/large-scale-un-response-needed-address-health>; International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and Programa Venezolano de Educación Acción en Derechos Humanos (Provea), "Venezuela's Complex Humanitarian Emergency Exacerbated by Covid-19: The International Community Must Promote Urgent Humanitarian Agreements That Favour Solutions to the Food and Health Crisis," 2020, <https://provea.org/wp-content/uploads/Venezuela-English-.pdf>; HumVenezuela, "Complex Humanitarian Emergency in Venezuela," 2021, <https://humvenezuela.com/en/inicio/>.

¹⁴ ENCOVI, Encuesta Nacional de Condiciones de Vida 2021 - Documento Técnico, 2021, https://assets.website-files.com/5d14c6a5c4ad42a4e794d0f7/6153a991f57a4692b5d525de_Documento%20Tecnico%20ENCOVI%202021%20NP.pdf

¹⁵ HumVenezuela, "Complex Humanitarian Emergency in Venezuela;" IACHR, "Annual Report 2019. Chapter IV.B Venezuela," 2019, <https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/docs/annual/2019/docs/IA2019cap4BVE-en.pdf>; ENH, "Encuesta 2019," Encuesta Nacional de Hospitales, 2019, <https://www.encuestanacionaldehospitales.com/antteriores>. According to data provided by the National Hospitals Survey, in 2019 alone only 9 percent of hospitals had regular provision of water, 63 percent reported power failures and shortages of medical supplies lacked in 50 percent of emergency rooms.

mobilize; research has shown that these factors will also condition the possibilities for subsequent democratization.¹⁶

Additionally, the correlation of power among political actors as well as among non-partisan and non-state actors has changed. Maduro and his closest elites have so far survived significant external pressure and are consequently in a relatively better position to negotiate than in 2019 when the opposition represented a real threat. Understanding the ruling coalition more accurately, including the needs and fears of civilian and military actors, is critical for those who want to build a new democratic, inclusive political system.¹⁷ Accurately assessing the regime as well as the limitations of a transition process does not imply giving up on pursuing regime change or justice for human rights violations; rather, it means having a realistic understanding the complex trade-offs that a negotiated democratization process often implies.¹⁸

Moderation in the Face of (High) Repression

Non-violent mobilization, coordination, and participation has helped opposition parties grow in electoral terms in Venezuela; these strategies have provided opportunities to learn, build linkages to communities, and put forward new leadership. In contrast, when the opposition has not organized for elections or boycotted these altogether (i.e., 2005, 2018, 2020) *chavismo* easily advanced in its authoritarian ambitions. Of course, it is still possible that, even if oppositions pursue institutional mechanisms to seek change, autocrats will shut down their efforts and repress them regardless, as it has occurred in Venezuela post 2015. What can oppositions do in such cases?

It seems that strategic moderation—the use of institutional and non-violent mechanisms—in the face of high repression would still represent the best alternative for democratic political oppositions to resist and potentially seek change. Such moderation brings a series of hypothetical benefits.

- First, it allows opposition groups to still do the necessary political work, even if underground, within the communities. This can help them create relationships of trust and engage citizens in a *process* of change rather than an event or series of “one-off” actions to oust an autocrat from office.

¹⁶ Adam Day, Dirk Druet, and Luise Quaritsch, “When Dictators Fall: Preventing Violent Conflict During Transitions from Authoritarian Rule - United Nations University Centre for Policy Research” (New York: United Nations University, 2020), <https://cpr.unu.edu/research/projects/when-dictators-fall.html>.

¹⁷ Harold Trinkunas, “Venezuela’s Bolivarian Armed Force: Fear and Interest in the Face of Political Change” Latin American Program, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, July 2021, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/venezuelas-bolivarian-armed-force-fear-and-interest-face-political-change>.

¹⁸ Maryhen Jiménez Morales, “Venezuela’s Negotiations Won’t Get Rid of Maduro. So What’s Next?” *Americas Quarterly*, August 11, 2021, <https://americasquarterly.org/article/what-venezuelas-negotiations-wont-change/>; Michael Penfold, “Los dilemas de la transición venezolana,” *Prodavinci*, February 14, 2019, <https://prodavinci.com/los-dilemas-de-la-transicion-venezolana/>.



- Second, carrying out non-violent work can raise the cost of repression, as citizens, including regime supporters, would see it as illegitimate and unfair.¹⁹ International actors, ranging from governments to international organizations, would most likely support non-violent resistance and denounce coercive state behavior, which in turn can represent significant costs for authoritarian rulers.
- Third, a democratic non-violent opposition can gather broader support within and outside state borders. Being committed to moderate mechanisms can help bridge ideological divides among otherwise different actors and stakeholders, and help challengers portray a reliable and credible alternative to moderates within the regime or among its supporters.
- Fourth, parties will be able to better manage and maintain their coalition if they coalesce around moderate strategies and goals; they do no longer have to invest most resources in mitigating internal conflict but can instead focus on elaborating inclusive narratives, state and policy reforms, etc.
- Finally, given that, in an ideal scenario, moderate oppositions will have a program and strategy with which followers can identify, they can also break the cycle of radicalization and conflict induced by non-democratic regimes. Being proactive gives oppositions the opportunity to define their own identity and internal rules in the struggle for democratization, without the need to merely be reactive to the dilemmas created by autocrats.

In contrast, when oppositions emulate radical behavior and strategic preferences, they can lose internal and external supporters, contribute to elite cohesion, and weaken their credibility and legitimacy. In Venezuela, all-or-nothing strategies have proven to be ineffective. By having insisted on fast-track insurrectional mechanisms and promising a “clean” transition, some opposition groups might have raised the costs for moderates within their camp to 1) gather broader domestic and international support; 2) facilitate ruptures within the ruling coalition; and 3) build a wider domestic support base.

In the current context in Venezuela, a negotiated, gradual, but continuous set of democratizing reforms would appear to be the most stable way forward.

In the current context in Venezuela, a negotiated, gradual, but continuous set of democratizing reforms would appear to be the most stable way forward. Given the newly appointed electoral council, which for the first time in 22 years incorporates crucial opposition figures and members of civil society organizations, domestic and international actors should focus on guarding and strengthening this space to facilitate further serious and credible negotiations between political elites. Furthermore, the 2021 elections constitute yet another a focal point for collective action and potentially for some further liberalizing steps. This election provides a singular opportunity for opposition parties to coordinate their actions

¹⁹ Roman-Gabriel Olar, “Do They Know Something We Don’t? Diffusion of Repression in Authoritarian Regimes,” *Journal of Peace Research* 56, no. 5 (September 1, 2019): 667–81; Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan, *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict* (Columbia University Press, 2011).

and strategies. It seems essential that actors who are committed to reviving the electoral dimension of a democratization process pool their resources to present a viable political alternative with unitary candidacies. At the same time, political leaders can use the elections to motivate and organize citizens who are desperate for solutions to their daily problems, despite the risks that elections imply. Those who acknowledge the need for an incremental process of liberalization, however, must do the delicate communicational as well as serious political work to create the conditions for such an approach, including a fresh and credible narrative, sensible grass-roots mobilization campaigns, and international linkages to key allies willing to support a *process* of democratization.

Civil Society and International Actors

Through cross-regional work, scholars have demonstrated that civil society groups can be crucial actors prior to, during, and after democratization processes.²⁰ In Venezuela in recent years, civil society organizations across the country have exposed human rights violations and pressured the Maduro government to comply with its international obligations. These activities continue, along now with a call to opposition leaders to favor a negotiated path for resolving the country's political conflict. Despite the increased persecution (including criminalization) of non-governmental groups and effects of state fragility and the humanitarian crisis, dozens of civil society organizations carry out work on a variety of

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fronts; these include activism in the international and domestic spheres, strategic litigation, humanitarian assistance, and awareness raising campaigns, amongst others.²¹ Looking forward it seems critical that civil society actors maintain their impartiality and autonomy vis-à-vis political actors, despite existing polarization on an elite level across the political and ideological spectrum. Furthermore, these

groups could focus on 1) pressuring domestic and international actors to increase humanitarian assistance; 2) lowering the costs for negotiations through strategic public education campaigns; 3) helping political elites find common ground without looking to replace them at the negotiating table; 4) elaborating state and policy reforms for an inclusive democratic political system; 5) providing civic education and electoral assistance to assuage fears or confusion among the population regarding participation; 6) cultivating linkages to local actors and community-based leadership to guarantee internal pluralism; and 7) building

²⁰ Lucan Way, "The Maidan and Beyond: Civil Society and Democratization," *Journal of Democracy* 25, no. 3, (2014); Florian Bieber, "The Serbian Opposition and Civil Society: Roots of the Delayed Transition in Serbia," *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 17, no. 1 (2003): 73–90; Daniel Ritter, "Civil Society and the Velvet Revolution: Mobilizing for Democracy in Czechoslovakia" (Cosmos Working Paper 2012/4, 2012); Michael Bernhard, "What Do We Know about Civil Society and Regime Change Thirty Years after 1989?" *East European Politics* 36, no. 3 (July 2, 2020): 341–62.

²¹ Maryhen Jiménez and Eduardo Trujillo, "Developing Resilience in Authoritarian Contexts. Lessons From Venezuela in Comparative Perspective" (Caracas: CDH-UCAB, March 2021), <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1KWNucDmurWELL3hpgzmGugrQn7QDCvOA/view>.



a robust, nonviolent democratic movement that can shape and monitor a democratization process.

International actors will continue to be crucial during and after any formal transition to democracy in Venezuela. Their role should be limited to helping domestic actors create the conditions for a negotiated and incremental process of conflict resolution, instead of imposing a specific narrative or way out of the crisis. The United States and the European Union are major actors that can help create credible economic and political incentives for regime elites to engage in negotiations. Moreover, UN bodies and international development agencies should continue to assist Venezuela's population inside and outside the country.

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