

A Venezuelan warning and a proposal for President Trump

Felipe Pérez Martí
Movimiento Libertadores

1. Introduction and summary.

In this article, I warn the US against the Elliott Abrams kind of solution for Venezuelaⁱ.

I also propose an alternative solution which is to be shown optimal both, for the Venezuelan citizens, and for the strategic interests of the US. The simple idea is that since the game is a “*de facto*” one, more than a “*de iure*” one, as in the hawk vs chicken game, the player with bigger relative force takes the territory.

We have on our side much more relative potential force, but it is disperse, uncoordinated and without focus due to the existence of enemies in our ranks. The idea is to explain why that is the case and how to correct it, taking into account the current opportunities offered by the Maduro regime.

In effect, while being strongly weakened by the pressure from the US, and by its inability to cope with huge internal problems, Maduro went ahead and named an illegal electoral council in order for his regime to stay in power forever, in what we interpret to be a bluff of a weakened player in the brink of losing everything, to discourage our forces to continue fighting. With this they intend to take for them all the territory once and for all, in a move to transform the country in a safe haven with huge natural resources for terrorism and delinquency.

The opportunities come from the high negative impact which that move has had on an important part of the so far cohabitation opposition, which would now be willing to play the courage (hawk) strategy, if properly engaged by the other potential allied players. If we do nothing, their political prospects are going to be completely nullified in the near future. That has been confirmed by many further moves the regime has performed after naming the electoral council, like the declaration of the Minister of Defense, Padrino López, who said that while the Bolivarian army is in control, it will never will give up power to the democratic parties.

We propose to properly read the signal of the Maduro regime, and to go into the offensive. Here we summarize a strategic plan to do so which is an alternative to the Elliott Abrams one. Showing the negative consequences of Mr. Abrams plan for the interests of both, Venezuela and the US. This article is self contained, so it has the extension of a small essay that summarizes my approach to the solution to the Venezuelan problems.

1. Plebiscite to elect a new National Assembly, instead of extending its mandate.

To motivate our proposal, let us recall a very similar episode of the history of the US. In the midst of a civil war that almost broke the United States into three pieces, Abraham Lincolnⁱⁱ, in 1864, had to convince many of his political allies of the need to make the corresponding presidential elections at that time, since they insisted that he should

extend his mandate by decree given the prevailing political instability. He, facing the risks, insisted on respecting the constitutional precepts, knowing that if he did not do so, he would have lost the legitimacy of origin of his investiture, and the required republican moral authority for his leadership. His belief in democracy as the strongest foundation of the nascent nation in this critical moment produced the political impetus that allowed the nation to regain the unity of the entire North American territory.

Although Lincoln was assassinated by the secessionists, his courage and principles illuminated what happened next, in particular by laying the foundations of a strong state based on a solid rule of law, an example for the world in which no one, not even the president, should violate the constitution. The beneficial consequences for the well-being of Americans strengthened the doctrine that shows that the positive (what really happens) coincides with the normative (what should happen): the rule of law and the well-being of a nation that respects it at all levels, go together.

In Venezuela we are in a very similar historical situation, since we are in the middle of internal war that can dismantle us as a nation. In this environment, some democratic parties concerned with the dangers involved given the political instability, propose to extend by decree the mandate of a politically weakened National Assembly (NA), in spite the fact that the Constitution mandates an election this year. We propose, like Lincoln did, to respect our rule of law. Proper elections would strengthen, not weaken further, the NA, since it recovers its legitimacy of origin, and our adherence to democratic principles.

One of the main problems of extending the mandate of the current NA has to do with the rampant corruption of many of its members, in particular related to their attitude of cohabitation (playing chicken) and even collaboration regarding the Maduro regime, not taking into account our superior potential forces to coordinate and activate them in order to defeat it instead of capitulating to it. The idea is to extend the mandate only of the honest ones, but to revoke the ones who have not played the role they were invested to.

The proposal would open the gate for the Venezuelan citizens to be able to include themselves in the game in order to decide on the composition of the renewed National Assembly in order to clean it. That action by the legitimate sovereign of the nation would unblock the game within the opposition and allow all of us to go unified with all the forces available within the country. And would encourage the inclusion of the US if we perform our duties, so that Mr. Trump has a proper internal counterpart.

The expected impact of this coherent strategy would prevent us, as in the case of Lincoln and the US, from dismembering ourselves as a nation and to transform ourselves in a sort of “democratic” criminal safe haven, in which there are votes, but not elections, in a much worse kind of Cuba with very rich natural resources at the disposal of its gang leaders.

With the decisive support of the United States from the start of the process, properly obtained when they observe our true commitment and our efforts and guarantees, we would stage a plebiscite of the 16th of July of 2017 kind. A parallel election held on the

same day, the 6th of December, to the one organized by the illegitimate National Electoral Council (CNE, in Spanish) named by the Maduro regime.

But we also need a new president, to replace Juan Guaidó, since the new NA should not name it if the people can elect it. A Transitional Board should then be selected in the same electoral event. Together with the new NA, the Transitional Board would conform a new leadership that unifies the opposition democratic forces. In alliance with the international community, led by the US, that new, strengthened Venezuelan leadership would confront and defeat the regime posing against it an ultimatum using a credible threat.

The electoral event should be convoked either by a legitimate a CNE, chosen either by the current NA, as it corresponds, or directly by Juan Guaidó if there is not enough time to do it or there are political complications, given his constitutional presidential prerogatives. The proposal, elaborated with a strategic approach that takes into account the incentives of the players involved, can be seen hereⁱⁱⁱ.

It is to notice that the security of the people involved in the implementation of the electoral process should be guaranteed from the beginning, in order for the players in our side to play the game, since confronting an enemy with bigger military force would be suicidal.

The idea is that just as President Donald Trump, our best ally and guarantor, put a red line on Maduro to protect Juan Guaidó when he assumed his presidency, he is expected to act similarly in this case starting from its announcement. The agreement of the democratic opposition, including Juan Guaidó, with President Trump, would then guarantee the success of this plan, from the beginning.

Even with this powerful support, the plan entails similar risks that Abraham Lincoln faced, even assassination. But most Venezuelans are willing to face them, since the alternative means generalized starvation, unwanted migration and political slavery. We think Juan Guaidó is aware of that, and has strong incentives to engage in the proposed endeavor, in alliance with the US in order to succeed.

The Venezuelan people would support the electoral event if convoked by a unified opposition in coordination with the US, since the problem they have had is the lack of confidence in a Venezuelan leadership which meant a failure to them. With the opportunity to elect a new one as the proper local counterpart to Donald Trump, they would gladly go to vote, due to their desperate need of a speedy and definitive solution. What failed in the 16th of July plebiscite in 2017, would so be corrected.

3. Elliott Abrams alternative solution and the Venezuelan reality.

Even though the rent seeking system in Venezuela has been known for a long time, many political analysts do not take that into account regarding their analyses and strategies. With Chávez and Maduro it reached such a high levels that converted the country in a safe haven for terrorism, Colombian guerrillas, and narco mafias, among other delinquent businesses. The militarization of the country, together with the Cuban

influence, with China, Russia and Iran involvement, converted the illness in a menace not only to Venezuela. But to the whole region, and even to the West itself.

One of the few advantages of the immense crisis we have had is that many people have realized that the problem is a systemic one. And also that, given its excesses, we have the opportunity to counteract, to react against it in order to cure the illness it from its roots.

Although that has been known for a long time, very revealing information about the criminal nature of the Venezuelan regime has been coming out lately. In particular, following the arrest of Alex Saab and the journalistic investigations in that regard.

That has reinforced the certitude we have been stressing for some years now: this is not a standard kind of dictatorship, and this is not a standard kind of country. We are under a framework that will not be easy to eradicate if it is not assessed appropriately and if we do not act accordingly.

In particular, the problem will not be eliminated only with the removal of a few terrorist drug gang criminals, like the ones the US Justice Department has indicted, and the installment of a few opposition figures sharing the government with most of the representatives of a system which reached a level that will not be undone in a conventional way. As we will see below, those opposition figures who are pushing for that kind of way to solve the problem are also part of the problem.

On the contrary, the framework is really going to be reinforced that way because of the political and diplomatic support it would then have. However, that seems to be the “solution” that the US would be looking for if Elliot Abrams' proposal of a shared junta for a short transition before a general election is still in force, as it seems to be the case judging for quoted publication of the Global Public Affairs of the US Department of State, which has just recently been edited.

Seeking for such a kind of arrangement only suits national and international delinquent rent-seekers and their agents in the Venezuelan state institutions, as I have been saying for some time now. President Trump must know what is happening in Venezuela, a country very different from Chile, for example, where a shared power kind of transition meant a subsequent change towards democracy.

If a relevant player in the good side does not understand the disease of systemic rent-seeking in Venezuela he will not succeed formulating the strategy to cure it. The war would be lost if he acts assuming that the contradiction here is between the dictatorship and the opposition, as in other countries like the Chile of Pinochet. The true conflict map, on the contrary, shows a confrontation between the agents of the rent-seeking system, and the rest of Venezuelans. The differentiating key here is that most of the opposition is infected by those agents in its ranks.

Now, among the enemies of the rest of Venezuelans, the natural distinction must be made, in particular now that we have reached such a high level of intensity of the corrupt system: That of the moderate rent-seekers, who are the opposition politicians who live from the system, and the radicals, who are the agents of the system located in

the different power groups in the Maduro-Cuban-military narco-terrorist state. In this article you can see the respective arguments^{iv}.

Those two groups are in conflict among themselves too, related to how to divide the pie. In a way, both of those groups represent the divide between the rent seeking agents before Chávez, and the one after him. It is key to understand, then, that the moderate rent seekers, who are now in opposition, do not seek to change the system, but to share the pie.

One way to reach an agreement between them, leaving the interest of the rest of Venezuelan completely out of the deal, is to set up a mechanism of power sharing of the Elliott Abrams type. It would consist of “equal sharing” transitional board deal in which both Maduro and Guaidó stand aside, and the radical and moderate agents of the rent-seeking system share the executive power of government. But, again, basically all the rent-seeking system remains intact with all its criminal businesses integrated horizontally and vertically, nationally and internationally. Of course, this would not mean to moderate the system itself. It would incorporate the moderate agents into the juicy businesses of the radical agents, as can be inferred from a simple incentives analysis.

Regarding that deal, it can not be reached without force. We have already explained that this cohabitation between a rent-seeking opposition, which also has no factual force, and has not wanted to “ask for pizza” (as the external military aid in Venezuelan politics is colloquially called) and the Maduro regime is not a Nash equilibrium: radical rent-seekers would not want to share their loot (because they are criminals, of course, with their related businesses) with those who have nothing to offer in return. That is why they have kept only for them the entire territory so far, as we have predicted. Here I explain it, establishing the difference between the Venezuelan and the Bolivian solution^v.

Our issue here is that if the United States is not aware of what is at stake here, it will press with its force until the radical rent-seekers accept the Elliott Abrams kind of deal: it will lend the factual strength that moderate rent-seekers lack, to force a very partial Nash equilibrium, in which Maduro leaves, but everything remains the same, excluding from the game, and the result, both the Venezuelan and the North American people’s interests.

The "solution" Elliott Abrams type would be, therefore, against the interests of Venezuelans and North Americans as well, because removing some vultures, without removing meat, does not mean that other ones will not come almost immediately to replace them. In particular, the departure of Maduro, El Aissami, etc., does not imply that the drug trafficking, terrorist, Colombian guerrilla, criminal system in general will cease to exist, not even over time as we will see in next part of the article. Other puppets and agents of the same system will come, perhaps with some cosmetic changes in the economy and the politics (such as releasing prisoners of conscience). What we propose

is to use the force the US has in its own interests here and those of the Venezuelan people, too.

3. A new republic as the alternative solution: a new stable fixed point equilibrium.

With this deception, the true owner of the country, the Venezuelan people, could never be able to control the country and make mutually convenient agreements with the West. In particular, the strategic interests of the American people will suffer equally, as we can readily see.

It would never be like the transitions to democracy in Chile or Spain, because here the structure, unlike in those countries, behaves like what is called in dynamic systems theory as a stable fixed point equilibrium. It is a fixed point because if we are in it, we will not leave it. And it is stable because it is robust to non-systemic changes, being an attractor that neutralizes temporal deviations: if we deviate from it, we return to it in a time convergent process. Mr. Abrams' solution doesn't even propose a modest deviation from the fixed point. Let alone establishing a new stable fixed point. A new structure that would be the new attractor that suits Venezuelans, North Americans and the West.

The attractor that we propose is a true republic, in which law and justice prevail, as Lincoln wanted for the United States and Simón Bolívar for Venezuela. The technical remedy to the rent-seeking illness is well known, as applied in Norway or Alaska: it is done by a institutional design that avoids the rents from natural resources to go to the hands of the government. It goes directly to the citizens.

But the political solution is more complex. It requires a long term alliance between the players involved: The US representing the Western World, our patriotic military, the civil society, and the honest politicians. Setting up the new structure requires a major surgery that needs at least four years of a very strong Patriotic Board that governs basically by decree, in order to be able to restore democracy.

One year would not be enough to set up the required institutions for the new structure and to apply the strong measures to solve the disastrous situation regarding internal security, the economy, the social situation, the humanitarian crisis. It is worthwhile to highlight the issue of the Colombian and Hezbollah guerrillas, the drug cartels and mafias. Without enough time, as well as force and international direct involvement, no cleaning would be possible in order to be able to set up a true democracy without issues related to irregular organizations fracturing the territory, and intervening in people's decisions and well being.

After major surgery, it would take about twenty years, at least, to converge to the new stable fixed point. But since it would be the new attractor, convergence would be guaranteed as long as the mentioned national and international political coalition is set up with sufficient strength to watch over the process during the transition. Cultural change and adaptation to the new structure is not easy and automatic, since rent-seekers, at the national and international level, are naturally expected to be in a constant fight to return to the system that benefits them. You must have the appropriate team and

strategic plan for this long war, after achieving the initial battle that is crucial. Here is a proposal in that regard^{vi}.

4. A new national leadership and the required US support for our alternative.

As it has been implied, in order to be able to implement our proposal it is crucial to change the Venezuelan opposition leadership due to a clear conflict of interest involved. At the moment it is clear that the moderate rent seekers often lead interim President Juan Guaidó to follow their agenda. That agenda has to do with Mr. Abrams's plan, to deceive the United States and the Venezuelan people, preventing the necessary major surgery which would mean for them to abandon their corrupt ways using the state institutions to do so.

In many democratic countries there are rent-seekers, of course. The problem in Venezuela is that the system captures the whole state and the high government officials are puppets of the cartel of mafias which move the threads of economic and political power. In Venezuela the problem is specially bad, since the natural resources we have are so high that the cartel has the ability to pay very well even the service lobbyists reaching US and other countries political spheres.

We must then choose the leadership that represents the true interests of Venezuelan people. That is why we must sensitize and alert the Venezuelan people, the parties of courage, the patriotic military and President Donald Trump about this situation and the dilemma raised. We must also look for the right the solution, since we have the power to topple the system, not only Maduro, if we act together and take advantage of the historical opportunities this situation has presented to us.

That is one of the few good things, as we said, that this huge crisis has brought about: the system itself, which was in place well before Chávez, is in a historical crisis and has shown its true colors. The corrupt opposition politicians come from before Chávez, and led a false democracy which implied bad economic, social and institutional performance. In fact, those are the effects of the symptoms of the rent-seeking illness: the Dutch disease (that does not allow development of the tradable sectors, industry and agriculture), macroeconomic instability, weak democracy, territorial and institutional centralization, militarism, populism, endemic corruption and widespread culture of rentism.

Hence, the tactic that we propose is essential at this juncture to take advantage of the historic opportunities we have at hand now, and makes it clear that extending the NA without changes in its components would mean reinforcing the leadership of the moderate rent-seekers. Renewing the NA and choosing a Transitional Board with our proposal would mean, meanwhile, changing leadership for the proper solution.

This does not imply weakening the institution and the international support of the National Assembly, as some opposition congressmen have argued. On the contrary: The idea is to give it the legitimacy of origin that it has lost nationally due to the loss of

confidence of the population in the face of opposition corruption and its lack of effectiveness in the struggle against the dictatorship. And to allow the United States and the international community to have a real change, an interlocutor that aligns with its true interests. In that regard, it is known that the Trump administration is fed up with the changes and the doubts of the interim president Juan Guaidó to follow the route of courage, including the issue of the use of international military force.

Of course, it is a matter of being able to topple both Maduro and the system, not only wanting to do so. We have been assessing this issue now for a while, and we have put forward strong arguments showing that we have much more relative force than that of the enemies, which is what matters here. At the international level it is clear. The US alone would be able to defeat, in a face to face comparison, all the contenders involved in Venezuela in this geopolitical struggle.

Regarding the military, in reality most of them, by far, except for the corrupt higher echelons of command, they want to get rid of this situation that means hunger, instability and lack of prospect for them and their relatives. In fact, in relative terms, much more military personnel than civilians are in jail for political reasons. As one of the indicators to show that, the number of soldiers from all military ranks who are in jail for political reasons, represent about half of that for civilian political prisoners. And only 1% of the population are soldiers. So, there are, in relative terms, about 50 times more soldiers than civilians in prison for fighting against this regime.

Regarding the people, they are just there ready to be activated in the streets and to vote overwhelmingly in our favor, since they are like a bank wanting to give credit to new worthwhile investors with worthwhile production plans, given the opportunity to replace the failed current ones. And regarding politicians, there are some good ones who would have to be brought to this side.

It is a matter of organizing a sort of potluck of all those components of the good side of the fight, in which each attendant brings something to share to the party, since, contrary to what some politicians of the courage side have said, the US would not be encouraged to solve alone our problems without a local counterpart regarding leadership and conditions. They have had bad experiences in the past toppling dictators and not having proper local leadership, like in Irak and Libia.

Pizza alone is not enough. And asking for it does not necessarily guarantee that it will be delivered. We Venezuelans also have to cook pabellón criollo (creole pavilion) and arepas, in order to offer a good deal to the international forces which would bring their contribution to the potluck.

5. The US support and the B plan.

It is clear that without the support of the US our proposal would not be advisable due to security and other concerns. But even in the scenario that Donald Trump is fooled and doesn't take advantage of the opportunity to change the system, we must appoint a new

parallel political leadership in exile, following a B plan that prepares for organized resistance of the Venezuelan people for the struggle that would come in that undesirable scenario.

In the event that Mr. Trump settles for the Abrams-type solution, he would soon realize the deception of that plan, recognizing sooner rather than later that a bastion in Venezuela against the West with a chameleonic change took hold with his help. By then we Venezuelans, if we prepare with the B plan, should have an authentic leadership prepared to be the proper and legitimate interlocutor of the US and the rest of the international community with a stake in the problem, to rescue the country.

Mr. Trump is our best ally, and we support him wholeheartedly to win the US election. Most probably he will win, given his strong performance and leadership, and given the bad candidate and bad practices of the democratic party.

Now, if Joe Biden wins, a very sad event for Venezuelans, not only for Americans, it would take longer for the US to realize the strategic mistake it made here as a nation.

In any case, with this plan B we would do as some courageous Jews did in World War II, who resisted the Nazis as best they could, and although they had casualties, they survived in the end, contrary to those who followed a cohabitation leadership that led them from the ghettos to the collective gas and cremation chambers. When the allied forces defeated the Nazis, they went on and organized themselves in order to push for the international agreement on the birth of the state of Israel.

Our rescue actions from the diaspora organized resistance would also be like those of Simón Bolívar and Francisco de Miranda when they came to liberate Venezuela from abroad, or Charles De Gaulle who came recover France from the United Kingdom.

6. Lincoln again and our historic commitment.

Recalling again the bravery and statesmanship of Abraham Lincoln action, what happened after that election in the difficult times of 1864 dictated not only the territorial unity, entity and strength of the United States, but also the defense of the western world. A US nation divided in three parts could not have been decisive, for example, as it was, in the two world wars that prevented German imperialism, in particular Hitler, from becoming a nefarious hegemon of the civilized world. Nor in the defense of the West against the Soviet Empire.

Similarly, in the current circumstances, allowing Venezuela to become a bastion of narco-terrorism and institutionalized crime would imply that the western foundations of civilization would be undermined in a similar way in what is to come in the world, in which China and the Muslim powers are eagerly on the lookout and advancing on their purposes of taking over.

It is time to be consistent and do things as they should be done: ethically, legally, and also strategically.

- i <https://translations.state.gov/2020/03/31/marco-para-la-transicion-democratica-de-venezuela/>
- ii The historical episode on Lincoln was told to me by Rafael Guillén.
- iii https://elestimulo.com/plebiscito-tipo-16-j-versus-cne-ilegitimo-el-fin-esta-cerca/?_tcode=ZWV6bjUz
- iv It first it appeared in La Patilla and El Estímulo; then I edited it a bit and it came out better in the Aporrea version:
<https://www.aporrea.org/oposicion/a279316.html>
- v <https://www.larazon.net/2020/04/mafias-capturaron-el-estado-y-parte-de-la-oposicion/>
- vi <https://www.movimientolibertadores.com/doc/GPSresumenv13.pdf>