

The rise and fall of the Venezuelan Interim President

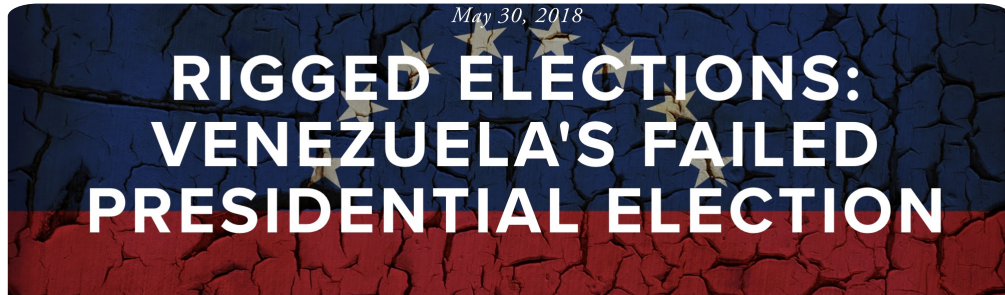
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- 2018: Annus horribilis
 - The Theory of Change in 2019
 - Art. 233: an innovative theory of Change
 - The valley of Indecision
 - Et tu?
 - Gangs, casinos, and factions
 - Corrales's APSF
 - The global dimension of the failure
 - Some lessons
-



2018: Annus horribilis



José Ignacio Hernández G.

March 2023

The Venezuelan Presidential election was held on May 20, 2018. According to the results [announced](#) by the electoral authority (the National Electoral

Election observers are important for democracy but few voters know who

- The rigged presidential election in May 2018.
- Nearly 60 countries, and the OAS, decided to repudiate the election.
- The National Assembly repudiated the election (not an electoral boycott).
- There was no strategy about what to do after the rigged election.
- Another missed opportunity?

The Theory of Change in 2019

➤ Premises:

- ✓ Maduro's lack of legitimacy.
- ✓ The National Assembly's legitimacy.
- ✓ International scrutiny.

➤ Strategy:

- ✓ "Transfer" the National Assembly's legitimacy to the Presidency.
- ✓ Maximize international support.

Presidential Countdown International Response

November 28, 2018 • 3:30 – 5:00 pm EST



Art. 233: an innovative theory of change

- Maduro was not an elected president.
- The speaker assumes as interim president.
- Foreign countries recognize the interim president.
- Maduro's capacity is hindered.



Art. 233: an innovative theory of change

➤ The Democratic Statute

- ✓ Lowering the cost of tolerance: transition justice, power-sharing agreements.
- ✓ Increasing the costs of repression: weak international capability.
- ✓ Art. 233 was not a strategy.



The valley of indecision



January 10,
2019



January 23,
2019

Estatuto de transición vs. gobierno de facto

Nov 18, 2019



February 4, 2019:
the Democratic
Statute

January 5, 2019
January 11, 2019



Trump recognizes Venezuelan opposition leader as
nation's president



By Jeremy Diamond and Boris Sanchez, CNN

Updated 4:15 AM EST, Thu January 24, 2019

February
20, 2019

Asamblea Nacional nombra a
nueva junta administradora de
PDVSA



The valley of indecision



The Interim President remains as speaker: a one-year term.



The political control of the "winning coalition"



Severe coordination problems: distrust and personal agendas

THE AMERICAS

Venezuelan opposition efforts to capture government's foreign assets draw scrutiny

By Anthony Faiola and Ana Vanessa Herrero
January 2, 2021 at 6:00 a.m. EST

Severe governance problems



Fondo Ashmore asegura que grupo de Primero Justicia avaló legalidad del bono PDVSA 2020



El caso de la declaratoria de nulidad de los bonos PDVSA 2020 que lleva un tribunal del distrito sur de Nueva York por un lado niega la petición de que se revele la identidad de abogado venezolano que contrataron los acreedores de esto títulos y por el otro revela que una fracción del partido Primero Justicia defendió la legalidad de estos papeles pese la declaratoria de nulidad hecha por la Asamblea Nacional.

El testimonio Xin Xu, ejecutivo del fondo financiero Ashmore Corp. indica que el abogado Rafael Correa...

The valley of indecision



The Interim Government: how to distribute political quotas to compensate distrust



Higher coordination costs

Et tu?:

AMERS DECEMBER 9, 2020 / 1:28 PM / UPDATED 2 YEARS AGO

Venezuela's Capriles calls on opposition to shut interim government -report

By Reuters Staff

2 MIN READ



CARACAS (Reuters) - Two-time Venezuelan opposition presidential candidate Henrique Capriles called for end to an interim government created in 2019 by congress chief Juan Guaido with U.S. backing, according to an interview published by the BBC on Wednesday.



The opposition
requested the end of
the Interim
Government.

The Interim
Government
requested the end of
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January 3, 2023: The
2015 National
Assembly
disbanded the
Interim President.



Gangs, casinos and factions

The 2019 transition strategy failed for three main reasons:

- **Gangs:** Maduro's elite were more criminal than political.
- **Casinos:** De *de facto* economic liberalization and improving the economic conditions diminished domestic pressures.
- **Factions:** Divisions and distrust in the opposition.

Asymmetrical party system fragmentation (APSF)

- Javier Corrales: *“In democracies where the party system explodes or implodes, democratic backsliding is more likely”* (p. 2)
- There was never a unified strategy in the opposition toward the Interim President: factions prevailed.
- The fragmentation of the opposition elevates the coordination cost: The Interim Government as a “Frankenstate.”
- Severe governance problems hindered the credibility of the Interim Government.



The global dimension of the failure

- The international community was not aligned with the democratic transition strategy.
- Maduro had the strong support of Russia and Iran.
- Two contradictory policies in the US: sanctions and recognition.
- The pandemic effect: Maduro delivered aid more efficiently than the Interim Government.





Some lessons

- Under the political conditions of 2019, the Interim Presidency was the right choice.
- The Interim Presidency consolidated the broad international support with specific legal consequences.
- The opposition was empowered, and Maduro was disempowered.
- How to defunct authoritarian rules without economic sanctions.
- The severe fragmentation of the opposition hindered the efficiency of the Interim Government.
- There is a vacuum after the disbandment of the interim president.