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Venezuela: The end of the year that was not expected

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December 31, 2019



No one knew back in January what situation Venezuela would be in by the end of the year. Few, very few, imagined that it would be calm and that there would be long queues in the streets, this time not because of a shortage of supplies as in 2015 or 2016, but rather to spend the Petro crypt-currency bonus granted by the government for the holidays.

Caracas is experiencing a calmer December than in previous years. The economy, in a dynamic of blockade and crisis -imbricated pieces-, has provided more respite for the population. There have been fireworks, Christmas tables with meat delivered by the government, and constant traffic on the main arteries of Caracas.

This is a situation that has been going on for several months and has created a plateau on the surface of an economy whose GDP has contracted by more than half in six years. A scenario marked by the emergence and consolidation of a dollarized sector of the population, the use of that currency in commercial transactions in

popular neighbourhoods or wealthy areas, and the multiplication of informal jobs in the face of the sustained fall in formal wages with the devaluation of the national currency and the increase in prices.

The situation in Caracas is more stable than in other parts of the country. There are no gasoline queues as in the highways or cities of the interior, the electricity supply has been maintained with few records of cuts, and a consumption circuit has been consolidated for the minority who live and think in dollars.

This December was difficult to predict at the beginning of the year with the self-proclamation of Juan Guaidó and the attempt to enter by force from Colombia on February 23. Neither in March, with the national blackout/sabotage that left the country in darkness for several days, or on April 30, with Guaidó and Leopoldo López together with a handful of military men in arms in the streets.

The offensive seemed almost unstoppable, not only because of the initial momentum of the Guaidó formula and its attractiveness to the Venezuelan opposition, which was once again mobilizing, but primarily because behind or in front of the self-proclaimed government there was always the U.S. government.

The role of the United States (US) was explicit throughout the year. John Bolton, a former security advisor, stated that they had no problem talking about the Monroe Doctrine, and, to maintain the Venezuelan dossier, Elliot Abrahms was appointed, a man who was at the forefront of the dirty wars in Central America in the 1980s, with events such as the massacre of El Mozote, in El Salvador.

The lineup of Donald Trump, Mike Pompeo, Bolton, Abrams, the anti-Castro axis headed by Marco Rubio, and the rarely visible powers of the deep state, formed a picture of final assault. This calculation of forces proved to be wrong for those who led the offensive: not only is Nicolas Maduro still in government, but Guaidó and the opposition as a whole are going through their worst months.

The crisis on the right has several overlapping elements: corruption scandals within the National Assembly (NA), the division between those who see possible agreements with the government for, for example, the legislative elections scheduled for 2020, and those who only propose a way out by force, and the issue of the NA's presidency, which must be renewed on January 5.

Whoever is in charge of the legislature is central both internally and internationally. At the national level because they largely define who will remain in the leadership of the right and its main platform. Internationally, because the engineering of the parallel government created by the United States has its main point of support in the National Assembly: it recognizes the person who is in charge of the legislative branch as the president in charge of the country.

The American commitment is to maintain Guaidó. They have already affirmed, anticipating an adverse scenario, that their support is not for him as a person, but for the presidency of the only institution they recognize as democratic. His remaining there would be to sustain the current correlation of forces, while his displacement could mean a setback for the US, as well as a new expression of its inability to resolve the Venezuela dossier. Internationalist 360°

The next key step after the 5th will be the call for legislative elections. For the moment, the topic of conversation for the majority of the population is the bonus given by the government, the acknowledgement of effort, or questions made by opponents who describe it as an instrument to control the population and maintain the same framework without resolving the economic situation.

The underlying problems will hardly be solved in a short time, due to the impact of the economic and financial blockade that will continue to escalate as has been announced by the United States, due to the low oil production that at times manages to stabilize at a million barrels per day, or the lack of capacity of the electricity sector to supply the current national demand.

The economy is in a process of transition and metamorphosis in a combination of a war scenario and policies that are rarely explained by the government. It is a complex picture, marked in turn by emigration and its consequent remittances that bring dollars to the popular neighbourhoods and the middle classes.

Venezuela is ending a year that has seemed like many years. These days, in the popular neighbourhoods, the bonds are being spent, the new year tables are being prepared, the rumbas with salsa, trap and reggaeton, those outside the country are missed, and the resilience of a society that is preparing for a 2020 that will surely be more complex than 2019 is underway.

Source: [*Internationalist 360°*](#)

