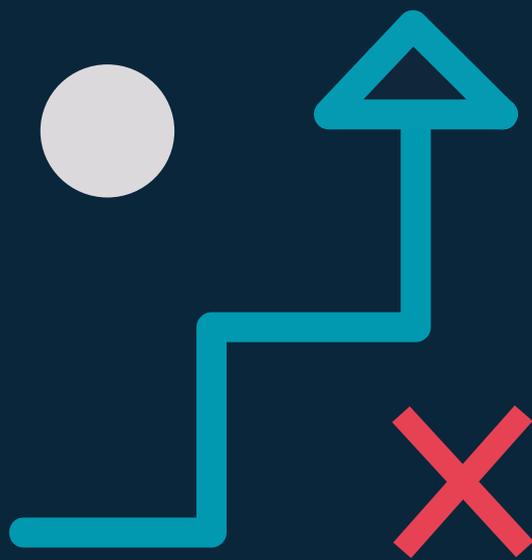


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**REPORT**

# **DISCOVERING GUAIDO (II): THE STRATEGY MAN**

Madrid, January 28, 2020



February 2019, we published an article titled [Discovering Guaidó: The Persistence Man](#). Four weeks earlier, Venezuelan opposition leader and interim Venezuelan President Juan Guaidó was a near unknown. At the time, when it was still uncertain as to how he would perform, we looked at his biography and testimonies from his family and friends, focusing on his persistent nature, ability to act even in the face of difficulties and worldview that leads him, in both the personal and political spheres, to avoid conflict.

One year later, all these attributes have been confirmed, even on the most complex world stages.

## ACROSS THE BORDER

With skill that surprised both his allies and adversaries in equal measure, Guaidó appeared in Bogotá on Sunday, Jan. 19 of this year. No one knows when or how he crossed the dangerous

Venezuela-Colombia border, patrolled not only by military units controlled by Nicolás Maduro, but also paramilitaries, members of the National Liberation Army (ELN) and groups dedicated to kidnapping and smuggling fuel. This led to an unexpected tour which, after his stay in Bogotá, took him to various European countries. It was seen as a success in the eyes of many analysts.

This Sunday, he met with Colombian President Iván Duque. Guaidó went to the Casa Nariño, the Bogotá presidential, where he received head of state honors. The following day, he participated in the 3rd Ministerial Hemispheric Conference to Combat Terrorism, attended by representatives from 18 countries, the UN, the OES and observers such as Israel and Mexico. In his speech, he exhibited the ELN's presence in Venezuela, as well as that of dissident factions of the FARC and of Hezbollah, worrying events of international relevance. He also met with Mike Pompeo, secretary of State for U.S. President Donald Trump, who stated his country's support for the cause Guaidó represents.

Guaidó then crossed the Atlantic and met with Prime Minister Boris Johnson in London and with EU Minister for Foreign Affairs Josep Borrell, European Commission Vice-President Margaritis Schinas and the foreign ministers of the Lima Group member countries in Brussels. He participated in the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. In the meetings he held with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz, Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis and French President Emmanuel Macron in Paris, he spoke about the humanitarian crisis, human rights and the importance of free and transparent elections.

In Spain, he met with Minister of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation Arancha González Laya. He received the Keys to the City from Mayor José Luis Martínez Almeida, and President of the Community of Madrid Isabel Díaz Ayuso honored him with the International Medal of the Community of Madrid. As well as meeting with his ambassadors in Europe, and with exiled deputies and magistrates, he held talks with the leaders of various Spanish parties, including Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) and People's Party (PP).

At all his meetings with Venezuelans in various European cities, whether planned or spontaneous, small or in the middle of great crowds, Guaido repeated his call for democratic unity and to continue the fight despite their difficulties. He departed from Madrid, the last port of call on his European tour, on Sunday, Jan. 26, to meet with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

## FIVE STRATEGIC PILLARS

From following Guaido's public activity over the last year, it is possible to infer at least five strategic pillars that have guided his day-to-day activities.

**First, he has never strayed from the dictates of the 39 articles that make up the Statute Governing the Transition to Democracy to Re-establish the Validity of the Constitution in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela**, as enacted by the National Assembly Jan. 5, 2019. Guaido has made the parliamentary institution his center of action. His active defense of the Constitution has allowed him to maintain the necessary cohesion and support from democratic political parties with representatives in the National Assembly. By adhering to the constitution's text, he has been able to guarantee international support.

**Second**, he is loyal to the Law of Amnesty and Recognition of all the guarantees of Democratic Reinsertion of Civil Servants and Military Staff who Collaborated in the Constitutional Restoration in Venezuela, enacted Jan. 25, 2019. **Guaido has continuously insisted on rejecting revenge and promoting reconciliation.** Despite the disagreements his position has caused in certain sectors, Guaido has remained firm. It is clear when reviewing his declarations that, even in the most adverse moments, he has not been tempted to use rhetoric that generalizes, discredits or deviates from the facts. His dedication to reconciliation has not faltered in the face of provocation, not from the Maduristas nor those opposed to reconciliation.

**Third**, he has had, with notable regularity, **direct contact with society.** Despite the various obstacles (including those of a political or military nature), Guaido has traveled around Venezuela, visiting communities; attending religious festivities; walking the streets of villages and cities; and

meeting with workers, students and professional and business trade unions. An analysis of his agenda shows an accessible leader who is especially gifted at getting around.

One example of this was seen last July, when the authorities prevented Guaido from using a commercial flight to travel to Isla Margarita. Instead of cancelling his trip, he made a 150-kilometer journey in a small fishing boat to cross the turbulent waters of the Caribbean Sea. There are images that show him standing in the small bow of the boat waving a Venezuelan flag as he approached the beach and disembarked.

His recently completed tour could be considered a major example of his fourth strategic line, the **systematic cultivation of international relations.** Guaido has succeeded in coordinating his personal endeavors with those of his designated ambassadors in different countries, the deputies and social leaders living in exile. In his speeches, he introduces issues of interest to foreign countries and multilateral organizations, including corruption and money laundering, terrorism, human rights violations, the humanitarian crisis, constitutionalism and the goal of calling for free elections.

**“His recently completed tour could be considered a major example of his fourth strategic line, the systematic cultivation of international relations.”**

Guaido has led a foreign policy campaign whose deep purpose has been to keep the Venezuelan crisis on the front pages of international public affairs.

The fifth and final pillar we can see is both political and personal. **Guaido knows where he should be.** He does not skip his commitments, always going to where he is expected and overcoming the problems that stand his way. It is likely these demonstrations of courage and responsibility are key reasons behind the political and emotional tie that connects him to his followers.

**“It is likely these demonstrations of courage and responsibility are key reasons behind the political and emotional tie that connects him to his followers.”**



## MADURO AND THE PARLIAMENT

The Venezuelan democratic opposition won the parliamentary elections in December 2015. From then on, Maduro has made it a goal to weaken the National Assembly. He has attempted this in various ways.

First, he called a National Constitutive Assembly in 2017, ignoring the requirements demanded by the law. He carried out an electoral process, one which was denounced both inside and outside Venezuela. The company responsible for the technical operation of the process reported inconsistencies between the number of votes processed and the number of votes reported by the electoral organization. Despite this, the assembly was sworn in on Aug. 4, 2017—but at great cost to Maduro and his supporters. It received criticism from the majority of the member countries of the Organization of American States (OAS), the European Union, MERCOSUR, the Inter-Parliamentary Union and many other international institutions. The reason given was that Maduro’s creation of a National Constituent Assembly had been in violation of rule of law.

The assembly has taken a number of actions, including removing parliamentary immunity for deputies in the National Assembly, banning political parties, enacting and repealing laws and removing democratically elected figures from office. Even so, it has not been possible to eliminate or neutralize the National Assembly’s eminently political and symbolic actions. In pursuit of his goals, he removed parliamentary immunity from almost 40 deputies, but from organizations distinct from parliament itself. Some deputies have been arrested or had their homes raided without any legal standing and without following the parameters of due process.

Maduro’s most recent attack on Parliament consisted of an operation shrouded in suspicion. A group of opposition parliamentarians created a dissident faction and swore themselves in as the new executive without the necessary quorum, while military authorities and pro-Maduro groups prevented Guaido and the rest of the deputies from entering parliament.

Despite its supporters’ expectations, Parliament’s supposed “new executive” has not succeeded in gaining recognition, neither in the country nor internationally. Universities, the Catholic Church, judges’ unions, workers and business leaders in Venezuela have categorically spoken out against the illegal process of supplanting the National Assembly’s true authorities.



## A NEW PHASE?

From December 2015 on, but more intensely since Guaid assumed the presidency of the National Assembly on Jan. 5, 2019, the Venezuelan parliament has taken centerstage in the fight between Venezuelan democrats and Maduro's regime.

In his thirst to put a stop to or take control of parliament, Maduro has lost the support and silent neutrality of many political parties and international institutions, who in some way had favored him. His excesses forced many to express their rejection and recognize the legitimacy of the National Assembly and of Juan Guaido as its legitimate president.

As for the question of how it is possible Guaido has been re-elected by his peers after such a tough year, one has to remember that before he was elected president of the Assembly, Guaido led the parliamentary fraction of Voluntad Popular (Popular Will) in 2017, which he recently resigned from to take up broader political representation, and the parliamentary opposition fraction in 2018. In both positions, Guaido always worked toward reconciliation, understanding and agreement. Among deputies, he is recognized for his gift with people, his capacity for listening and his work to find fair solutions acceptable to different political organizations.

All these characteristics (adherence to legality, dedication to reconciliation, direct contact with citizens, coordination of international support and

total fulfillment of his responsibilities), in addition to his attributes of being willing and open with the people he speaks to, have made it possible for Guaido to retain his leadership in the face of Maduro's power. After a tough first year as president of the National Assembly, he succeeded in being reelected.

Creating another executive for the National Assembly backfired for Maduro, with the worst possible results from his perspective: Now, the Venezuelan opposition has come together around Guaido's National Assembly, and international activism among allied countries has intensified.

Guaido's recent international tour could be interpreted as a turning point, marking the end of an era and the start of the next one. Most Venezuelans (over 85 percent, according to various opinion polls) are involved in an intense undertaking to improve living conditions and restore the validity of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela's Constitution.

**“Among deputies, he is recognized for his gift with people, his capacity for listening and his work to find fair solutions acceptable to different political organizations.”**

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**Antonieta Mendoza de López.** Vice President of Advocacy LatAm. She has more than twenty-five years of experience in Communication and Corporate Affairs for some of the largest companies in Latin America, such as PDVSA and Organización Cisneros. In the last six years, Antonieta has carried out intense work in the defense of the human rights of political prisoners in Venezuela. She is also founder of the Venezuelan chapter of the International Women’s Forum, and a member of the Board of Directors of the Eugenio Mendoza Foundation. She is also a member of the Venamcham Media Committee, the Venezuelan American Chamber of Commerce and Industry.



**Nelson Rivera.** Cultural journalist and strategic communications consultant. Nelson Rivera has combined his work in the fields of cultural journalism and strategic communication consulting. For more than three decades, he has acted as a consultant to more than 150 companies in the areas of image, reputation and crisis management, mainly in Venezuela, but also in countries such as Colombia, Panama, the Dominican Republic and Bolivia. He is a founding member of the Editorial Board of El Nacional Newspaper (1993), in Venezuela. In addition, since 1995 he has been director of Papel Literario, the oldest cultural publication in Latin America, which has been circulating since 1943 as part of the aforementioned Diario El Nacional. He is the author several essays, El círculo totalitario (Random House Mondadori, 2009) and editor of two volumes of the series Pensar la transición (Universidad Católica Andrés Bello, 2017 and 2018). Since 2005 he has maintained a weekly column specializing in books on thought, history, sociology and social psychology.

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