

# Why I'm Optimistic About Venezuela

If there were mass protests against the government of Saudi Arabia, and the U.S. decided to recognize the opposition as the legitimate government of Saudi, I would expect disaster. Why? Because...

1. Supporters of the Saudi monarchy remain powerful and confident enough to aggressively fight back, plunging the country into hellish civil war.
2. If the monarchy loses, it's most likely replacement will be a revolutionary Islamist dictatorship.
3. Even if the new Saudi government sticks to democracy, the median Saudi voter probably favors even worse policies than the Saudi monarchy now imposes. In particular, government enforcement of Islamic fundamentalism would tighten, and economic policies would move even further toward socialism and populism.

And now you know why I am optimistic about the constitutional crisis in Venezuela.

1. Supporters of Maduro are too weak and demoralized to aggressively fight back, so I put the risk of hellish civil war below 10%. (Indeed, since there's a high base rate for civil wars in situations this dire, it's quite possible that the risk of civil war has actually fallen due to the crisis).
2. If the Maduro regime loses, its most likely replacement will be a moderate pro-Western democracy.
3. If the new Venezuelan government sticks to democracy, the median Venezuelan almost certainly favors *better* policies than Maduro now imposes. In particular, government enforcement of socialist ideology will crumble, and economic policies will move sharply away from socialism and populism.

If you're too young to remember the collapse of Communism, this is a tiny taste of the sweetness of 1988-1991. When's the last time you had reasonable hope of dramatic peaceful pro-freedom change in the world?