

TWO WEEKS NOTICE: A LATIN AMERICAN POLITICS BLOG

ABOUT ME

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My Latest Book



Understanding Latin American Politics
Gregory Weeks (f

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TUESDAY, MARCH 03, 2015

Maduro and Political Tolerance in Venezuela

Really interesting analysis from Mariana Rodríguez and Liz Zechmeister in an [AmericasBarometer Topical Brief](#) about political tolerance in Venezuela. Using LAPOP survey data, they assert the following:

What levels of public support exist for government efforts to silence regime critics in Venezuela? Very little, according to data from the LAPOP AmericasBarometer. In fact, Venezuelans rank as the most supportive of regime critics' political rights in comparison with citizens of other Latin American and Caribbean countries, as seen in Figure 2.

Moreover, levels of political tolerance have increased. Figure 3 displays average support for each act within the tolerance index and compares averages across 2012 and 2014. As can be observed, Venezuelans have grown more tolerant since 2012 on every dimension. In 2014, a year in which Venezuelan politics fell into a crisis marked by widespread protests against the government and by political violence, citizens expressed more support for the right of dissenters to peacefully demonstrate and voice their opinions, vote, and run for public office.

These data suggest that strident moves against opposition leaders, to the extent that they appear to be moves designed to silence regime critics, may further undermine President Maduro's popularity

For the figures, just click on the link.

I think this is fascinating. Clearly Nicolás Maduro figures that Venezuelans will be tolerant of opposition leaders being arrested, yet evidence suggests he's wrong. For all the polarization the country has experienced, it has tolerant citizens.

What this does *not* tell us, though, is where the breaking point might be. Maduro has been right so far about tolerance—which obviously has helped him as well—but at what point will Venezuelans say they've had enough? The opposition had hoped that the protests of a year ago marked that point, but they were wrong. In this sense, putting Leopoldo López in jail on its own wasn't enough ([he didn't help his own case either](#)). Instead, we might look at it more usefully as a gradual, iterative process. But we just don't know how many iterations are required before Venezuelans demand change from the government (or change of the government).

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