

Cato's Letter

A QUARTERLY
MESSAGE
ON LIBERTY

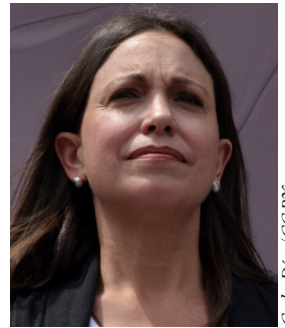
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What's Next for Venezuela?

MARÍA CORINA MACHADO

Venezuela is facing an existential crossroads. Either we move forward in the path of strength and courage that we've worked on these last months, or we can fall once again into this trap created by the Maduro regime of the so-called dialogues and farce elections.

The Venezuelan criminal state has unleashed an unconventional conflict in coalition with terrorist groups such as the National Liberation Army, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, Hezbollah, Hamas, drug cartels, and the Cuban tyranny. They will not let go of Venezuelan territory, resources, and institutions unless they are confronted with a stronger, liberating force of those democratic actors in the region who understand what is at stake. The consequences of Nicolás Maduro and the regime staying in power are devastating. Just imagine what could happen in Venezuela in six months or what could happen to Colombia at the end of this year.



Carlos Díaz/CC BY

MARÍA CORINA MACHADO was a member of the National Assembly of Venezuela from 2011 to 2014 and a presidential candidate in 2012. Today, she is a leading figure in the nation's opposition movement. Machado spoke via video at a Cato policy forum in July.

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This systematically created exodus of millions of Venezuelans has strong consequences for our neighboring countries. But not all are obvious, because the regime has managed to infiltrate some of these groups of migrants with what it calls “social movements,” which are individuals whose objective is to destabilize the democracies in our region. At the same time, we realize what it means: Russia and Iran’s increased use of Venezuela as a hub for intelligence activities and how this constitutes a threat to the national security of the United States.

So, what’s next? First, we need to have a common and real characterization of the true nature of the regime we’re facing. This is not a conventional dictatorship. Part of the problem, I think, has been this mistaken analogy to the old sort of dictatorships, like what you saw in Latin America in the 1980s. If it were that, it would have fallen a long time ago. We are facing a criminal state more akin to a mafia than a dictatorship, and the efficient option to have a regime change is going to be unconventional. It is going to mean hitting at the points where we can challenge the corrupt profiteering, the racketeering, and the mechanism of fear and enforcement.

“It is already a case of hostile foreign intervention in our hemisphere.”

This should start with the creation of a coalition of our closest allies—those that suffer most from the Venezuelan tragedy, including Colombia, Brazil, the Netherlands, the Antilles, and the United States.

The objective is to build a credible threat that has high costs for the regime and its global partners. Apologists for the regime talk about the opposition as somehow being a creation of foreign forces; but look at the reality. There are Russian forces, and Cuban forces, in Venezuela by the thousands propping up the regime. Venezuela is a country effectively under foreign occupation, and it’s not an occupation by the United States. This is not just a domestic political crisis; it is already a case of hostile foreign intervention in our hemisphere, and to resist it, we need help from our allies. This is why we have collective defense arrangements for the Americas, such as the Organization of American States and the 1948 Rio Treaty.

This should be done with the use of intelligence resources, diplomacy,

information, and communications to assist police actions by the legitimate, constitutional government of Venezuela. The first objective is to dismantle the repression and intelligence apparatus of the Maduro regime, which is today the regime's main source of support. This is what keeps people in fear for their lives, and it has to be the first target, including for targeted international sanctions. Once this is done, we can move ahead with more specific actions done with surgical precision to dismantle the regime. This will show that the strength of the liberating forces is bigger, stronger, and more effective than that of the mafia system that keeps the current regime in power.

“Support for Maduro among the Venezuelan people is a very small minority.”

There are several myths that the regime has been putting into the international public opinion, pushing as part of its narrative. The objective is to inhibit the international action and support needed to produce regime change. First, the regime insists in saying that its opposition is demanding an international invasion. This is the 21st century! I have already mentioned the irregular nature of this conflict, this unconventional war. What we require is the application of focused strength against those points that are critical for the support of the regime. Nobody thinks that entails a foreign invasion or occupation of the country, and that is not what we are advocating. Venezuelans don't want it, and of course, it is understandable why Americans don't want it either.

Another myth is that getting international support for liberation of Venezuela would produce a civil war. This is absolutely false. In Venezuela, there are not strong cultural, ideological, ethnical, religious, or regional tensions among our citizens. Venezuela is a developed and relatively homogenous country. Venezuela has a society that is cohesive and overwhelmingly demands the immediate departure of the current regime. This is not an evenly divided society between two near-equal factions. That misrepresents the reality that the actual support for Maduro among the Venezuelan people is a very small minority, and even most of that would evaporate if he no longer had state power to abuse in rewarding his cronies and punishing the opposition. If they had the real support of any viable political faction among Venezuelans, they wouldn't need foreign soldiers to keep control.

Finally, another myth is that to have a peaceful transition, members of the Maduro mafia should be part of that government. This is not only unacceptable from an ethical perspective but would be a huge political error, because that would mean that Venezuela would turn and consolidate into a mafia state. We just have to see the history of Nicaragua to understand the consequences of such a mistake.

“We Venezuelans are committed to do what it takes.”

That’s why today, we must realize that our objective goes beyond the departure of Maduro or even dismantling the regime that is in power in Venezuela. We need to stop and get rid of the anti-Western, criminal, terrorist, and narco-trafficking forces that have created this so-called revolution, this system, this model that is using our nation to destabilize the whole hemisphere. We Venezuelans are committed to do what it takes, but we need support and we need it now. This is our hugest, our biggest opportunity in our nation’s and our republic’s history, but it is also the biggest threat this hemisphere has faced in a long time. There is only one option. To move ahead, there is only one option: victory. ■

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“Free Thoughts explores the richness, power, and diversity of libertarian thought.”

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A weekly show about politics and liberty, featuring conversations with top scholars, philosophers, historians, economists, and public policy experts.

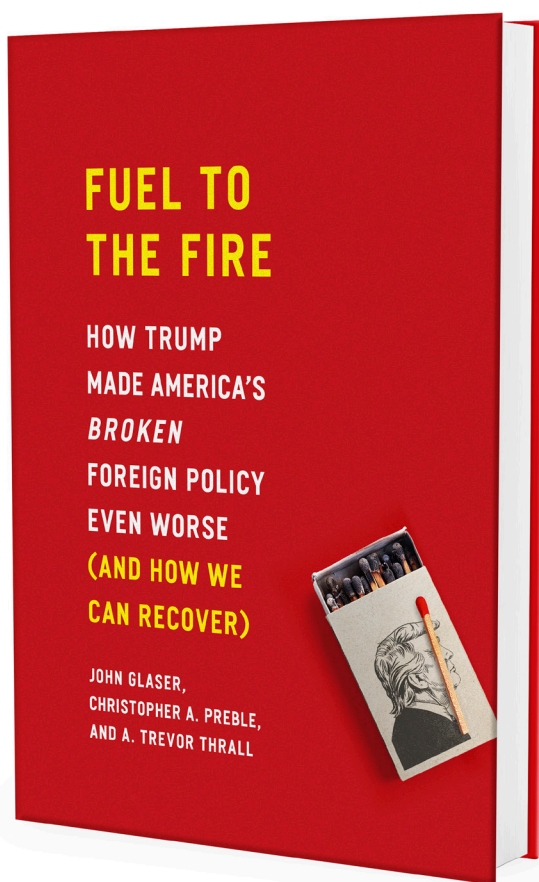


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“A book for our current times and beyond.”

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As a candidate, Donald Trump declared U.S. foreign policy “a complete and total disaster.” He vowed his administration would put American interests above all other considerations.

But the Trump administration has doubled down on the misguided, overly militarized policies of the last three decades.

Fuel to the Fire explores the key elements of Trump’s approach to the world, and explains why they have failed. The authors call for a new approach to advance American security and prosperity without embarking upon costly and counter-productive wars abroad.



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SCHOLAR PROFILE

Marian L. Tupy

MARIAN L. TUPY is the editor of HumanProgress.org and a senior policy analyst at the Center for Global Liberty and Prosperity. He specializes in globalization and global well-being. Tupy received his BA in international relations and classics from the University of the Witwatersrand and his PhD in international relations from the University of St. Andrews.

How did your upbringing lead you to libertarianism?

I was born in communist Czechoslovakia, which pretty much destroyed any illusions that I may have had, as a young person, about the desirability of socialism and central planning. But it was only after I went to college and read *Atlas Shrugged* that I realized that capitalism is not only an efficient economic system, in the sense that it creates more wealth than any other economic system known to humanity, but also a moral one, because it is based on voluntary interaction between people and allows the market to reward those who create value. After Rand, I quickly progressed to Hayek, Friedman, Kirzner, and Bauer and made libertarianism a subject of my doctoral studies. My thesis on libertarianism and globalization made me a good fit for a position that opened up in 2002 in what was then Cato's Project on Global Economic Liberty.

You worked on economic development in Africa and other countries—what did that teach you, and how did it inspire HumanProgress.org?

My work on ex-communist countries and Africa taught me to appreciate the importance of policies and institutions for economic development. Civil and economic freedoms allow people to do what comes naturally to them—improving their well-being. If people understand and appreciate that the world is actually getting better, which is the goal of HumanProgress.org, they may also more strongly support markets and liberal democracy.

What are some of the most interesting ways we know the world is getting better?

Compared to the past, we live longer, healthier, and more comfortable lives on a cleaner and safer planet. Most of our remaining problems, such as pollution and overfishing, are restricted to the “commons” or areas where property rights are not clearly established. Human ingenuity has found solutions to many problems and can resolve the challenges that remain. But progress is neither linear nor guaranteed. A return of protectionism or international conflict could reverse many of the gains we have made since the dawn of the Industrial Revolution.

You have written that “American students interested in ‘socialism’ today are too young to remember what the world actually looked like the last time socialism held sway.” As someone who grew up under communism, what should modern fans of socialism realize?

They should read Hayek's *The Road to Serfdom* and realize that socialism is not only an incredibly inefficient system—just look at the economies of Venezuela and Cuba—but is also inimical to political and personal freedom. As socialist failures become more pronounced, the state must usurp ever more power over the lives of ordinary people and use evermore force to silence dissent. It concerns me greatly that the public education monopoly in my adoptive country not only fails to teach too many American children how to read, write, and count but also fails to teach them about the struggle for and the importance of human freedom. ■

David H. Koch

1940–2019

The directors and staff of the Cato Institute, along with friends of liberty throughout the world, are saddened by the passing of David Koch on August 23 at the age of 79.

David's accomplishments as a businessman and philanthropist were most impressive. But, first and foremost, we remember and admire him for his efforts to advance liberty in the United States and around the world, and his steadfast dedication to libertarian principles.

David was a director emeritus of Cato, having served on our board of directors for nearly 30 years. Over this time, the Institute, the Cato community, and our work benefited greatly from his service, insight, generosity, and example. We will not forget the many ways in which he contributed to our mission.

He was motivated by a firm belief that liberty is the means to human flourishing, which would allow every individual to live a prosperous, meaningful life in a country and world at peace. He also believed strongly that the rights granted to us by nature and protected by the Constitution cannot be denied to any American. Because of the deteriorating state of our national discourse, David often bore unwarranted public criticism. But he did so with dignity, and the fact that this did not deter

him from his work in advancing freedom merits great respect from all of us.

Cato senior fellow Walter Olson shares how David's generosity not only touched many lives but touched those lives in numerous ways:

"When I resolved to sample New York City's high culture in my 30s on a modest salary, I discovered affordable performing arts at Lincoln Center, al-

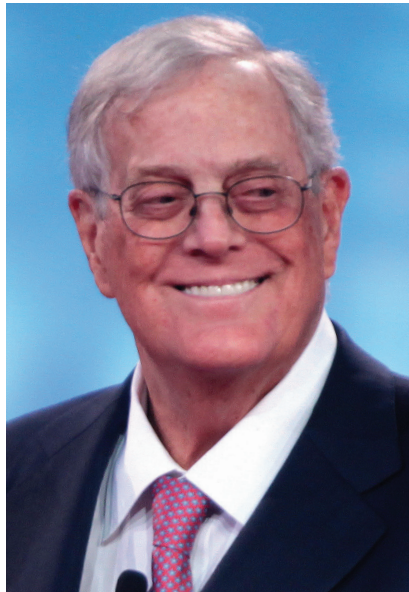
ready then the object of generosity that was eventually to lead to the renaming of the David H. Koch Theater. It gave me joy.

And everywhere I went in the liberty movement over 40 years, where there was a good cause, David Koch seemed to be somewhere in the background giving support, whether it was economic liberty, peace between nations, free trade,

freedom to marry, or free speech. It gave me inspiration.

His death leaves the world poorer."

We have no doubt that David's partnership will be missed by so many of the causes to which he dedicated himself, not least of which is the cause of liberty. But of course, he will be missed most of all by his family, to whom we extend our heartfelt sympathy. ■



“It changed the way I look at the world.”

—RUSS ROBERTS, host of *EconTalk*



The Three Languages of Politics is a profoundly illuminating exploration of communication in America's political landscape. This is not a book about one ideology over another. Instead, it is a book about how we communicate issues and our ideologies and how language intended to persuade instead divides. Arnold Kling offers a way to see through our rhetorical blinders so that we can incorporate new perspectives, nuances, and thinking into the important issues we must together share and resolve.



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