

# Advisory Panel on the Question of the Venezuela Crisis (APQVC)

The political crisis



<b>Forum</b>	Advisory Panel on the Question of the Venezuela Crisis
<b>Issue:</b>	The political crisis
<b>Student Officer:</b>	Andaç Durmaz, Felix Wach
<b>Position:</b>	President of the APQVC, Deputy President of the APQVC

---

## Introduction

In recent years, the politically declining Venezuela has been suffering under the authoritarian rule of Nicolás Maduro, especially since his re-election in 2018 and the Coronavirus pandemic of 2019. Maduro's election within the South American county in 2013, following the death of Hugo Chávez who was known for his critique of United States foreign policies, Latin American integration and his socialist governing, has primarily led to a suppression on the freedom of voters and other political opponents. Whilst resisting international pressure to back down from his role of presidency since his re-election (which many regarded as corrupt), Maduro has taken initiative to eradicate political opposition by utilizing security forces via corrupt courts and rewarding loyalty towards his government by financially supporting his allies. Maduro's main political opponent Juan Guaidó, former president of the National assembly (the last independent branch of the government) and once recognised as interim president in over 60 countries, has seen his support fade since 2019. Overall, political opposition has been seen to be weak and divided with many leaders being either exiled or in prison (241 political prisoners).

## Definition of Key Terms

### Acting President

"An individual appointed by the Board to fulfill the duties and responsibilities of the President" ("Acting president"). In Venezuela's case, when Maduro is the president that was elected according to the votings, the National Assembly recognized Juan Guaidó as the "acting president," with the support of the public ("Venezuelan opposition leader").



## Coup d'état

“The sudden, violent overthrow of an existing government by a small group” (“coup d'état”). When the National Assembly deemed 2018 elections as invalid and recognized Juan Guaidó as the acting president, Maduro's government claimed this situation to be a coup d'état which they accused the United States for organizing.

## General Overview

Since Maduro's election (2013), his authoritarian rule has prevailed against opposition within Venezuela and international power. Six months after the election, the power to rule by decree was given to Maduro legislatively to try to combat the country's economic crisis. Since his election however, Venezuela's socioeconomic status has evidently declined whereas major issues such as poverty, hunger, crime and inflation have unambiguously increased. Most analysts have attributed this immediate decline to some of the economic policies implemented by Maduro and Chávez's regimes, however Maduro himself claims they directly correlate to the economic war waged by his opponents. There have been numerous attempts to overthrow Maduro's government and some include:

## Guaidó's Unity Platform

Juan Guaidó, Maduro's main political opponent and former interim president, has had a massive dissipation in support and his supporters are being persecuted by the Maduro government since there was a stagnation in Norway-led negotiations in 2019. The Biden administration does however still recognise Guaidó's government in order to prevent foreign Venezuelan assets from being seized under Maduro's power. On the other hand, officials have met with Maduro in March 2022 to debate energy dilemmas and the illegal detainment of US citizens in Venezuela. Despite the US's efforts to invalidate Maduro's power, it is clearly prevalent. In April of 2021, Guaidó formed, alongside opposition parties and business leaders, the Unity Platform which was targeted towards negotiating with the Maduro government. These negotiations entail talks on improving humanitarian conditions and rights of civilians in Venezuela. Contrastingly, Maduro's government has been seeking a relief on the sanctions imposed on them by international powers as well as global recognition. Although these talks commenced in 2021 and were mediated by Norway, they have recently been



abruptly suspended by Maduro following US actions of humanitarian aid provisions towards Venezuela. Ultimately, despite Guaidó's efforts in challenging Maduro's power, armed forces have remained mostly loyal to Maduro with his socialist party obtaining major influence on the supreme court.

### Silvercop USA attempt

On May 3<sup>rd</sup> 2020, another attempt to overthrow Maduro's government was initiated involving Venezuelan armed dissidents. The coup was organised by the American company 'Silvercop USA' and was led by the Canadian-American mercenary Jordan Goudreau. Juan Guaidó has denied any involvement in this operation although evidence has suggested that he signed a contract with Goudreau for 213 million US Dollars in 2019. Maduro's government claims the USA's Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) was responsible for this with the support of the Colombian government as they trained the men involved. Thirteen men were captured and eight were killed.

### International Relations

Maduro's government has very close ties to Putin's government. There have been talks between Venezuela and Russia on developing their cooperation especially after Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Although previous relations between Venezuela and the USA have been discordant, due to the increased prices of oil in relation to the Russo-Ukraine, conversations have been instigated between Maduro and US officials. There are hints towards a possible lifting of US sanctions on Venezuela which would further their already developing relations. Some of these sanctions currently in place include travel bans on Maduro officials which were imposed on Venezuela by the US, the European Union (EU), Canada and other European nations. Some European nations, such as the United Kingdom, still recognize Guaidó as the interim president however most do not. Many nations have released statements which suggest that if the conditions for Venezuelan civilians improve many sanctions can be lifted. However, conversely, Maduro still harbors a lot of support from other nations, such as Russia, Turkey, Cuba, Iran and China. As previously mentioned, Russia has assisted Maduro via the oil industry – although since the invasion of Ukraine and the sanctions placed on Russia this task has been impaired. They also have sent equipment and military officials to Venezuela. Turkey continues to acquire illegally mined Venezuelan gold. Since 2020, Iran has traded gasoline for gold with Venezuela. China has ensured the provision of surveillance equipment and technology for Maduro whilst also continuing to purchase Venezuelan oil.



## US policies and sanctions

Since 2019, the United States has ceased to recognise Maduro as the legitimate leader of Venezuela following his electoral victory which was widely condemned as fraudulent. The Biden administration has maintained a policy similar to the previous Trump administration which seeks to remove Maduro from power and compel him to leave the office by utilizing sanctions and applying economic, diplomatic and legal pressure. However, since the massive inflation in oil prices in March 2022, discussions and agreements between the Maduro government and the US are developing. Essentially, the US is entertaining a policy shift towards Venezuela to ameliorate the current political crisis and widespread inflation issues. That being said, the US is still targeting support towards the people of Venezuela by engaging in diplomacy to push back towards a more democratic Venezuela. The US also seeks to hold corrupt Maduro officials accountable. On March 8th 2021, the USA designated Venezuela and its citizens as eligible for Temporary Protected Status (TPS), thereby allowing Venezuelan civilians to seek protection in the US. Sanctions on Venezuela have been reviewed by the US and should negotiations advance, some relief could be obtained for Venezuela. Some of the present sanctions on Venezuela currently include: Financial Sanctions in which the Maduro government has much more limited and restricted access to US Markets, as well as cryptocurrency transactions issued by the Maduro Government and purchasing Venezueland debt are prohibited. Individual Sanctions (sanctions on drug trafficking and terrorism for example) and Sectoral Sanctions which sees blocking assets and transactions with Venezuela's main bank, the PdVSA, as well as the state gold mining company are also currently in place.



## Major Parties Involved

### Venezuela

Venezuela is represented by Maduro's government, which lacks public support. The National Assembly was the only major institution not under the Maduro administration. However, with December 2020 elections, the new assembly mostly consists of the PSUV (Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela) members. Still, the government doesn't have the support of Venezuelan citizens and the international community. But through the use of military power, Maduro manages to stay in power.

### Juan Guaidó

Juan Guaidó is the representative of the opposition party to the currently-existing government. He declared himself to be the acting president of the country as he is the president of the National Assembly. The National Assembly, together with the international community, supports his side in this political process. He is an important voice for the Venezuelans. However, his power is limited as he doesn't have access to military power. Since he didn't officially win the election, it is not likely for him to gain legislative power.

### United States of America

The United States is one of the countries who recognize Guaidó's administration over Maduro's. To demonstrate their opposition to the current government, the US aimed to press Venezuela's economy by applying embargo on the country. This situation gave some power to the US over Venezuela as their economic crisis is even worsened by these sanctions.

## Timeline of Key Events

Date	Description of event
March 5 <sup>th</sup> , 2013	Nicolás Maduro became the president of Venezuela after Chávez's death.
December 6 <sup>th</sup> , 2015	The Democratic Unity coalition won control of the National Assembly.
August 4 <sup>th</sup> , 2017	The National Constituent Assembly was established.
March, 2017	



July, 2017	Venezuela's Supreme Court attempts to take over functions of the National assembly but is denied.
May 20 <sup>th</sup> , 2018	Venezuela holds a referendum to approve the creation of a boycotted Assembly. Highly controversial elections were held and Maduro was re-elected as the president of Venezuela.
January 23 <sup>rd</sup> , 2019	Juan Guaidó, with the support of the National Assembly declared himself as the acting president of Venezuela.
January 2019	The US imposed additional sanctions, ordering the freezing of Venezuela's assets in the US.
May 3 <sup>rd</sup> 2020	The US company Silvercop US launched a coup on Maduro's government utilizing Venezuelan security forces and armed dissidents.
July 2020	Juan Guaidó visits Spain but isn't received by Spanish PM Sanchez.
April 21 <sup>st</sup> 2021	Juan Guaidó presented the new opposition alliance to Maduro's government called the Unity Platform

## UN involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

In the Security Council (SC), two resolutions on Venezuela were drafted. However, none of them passed ("UN Documents"). One of them was vetoed by the Russian Federation and China, and the other one didn't have enough votes to pass.

- United States of America: draft resolution, 28 February 2019 (S/2019/186)
- Russian Federation: draft resolution, 28 February 2019 (S/2019/190)

## Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

It has been shown that this political crisis cannot be solved through democratic means. In the last presidential elections, the results from the surveys didn't match the actual election results as Maduro was elected. The data published after the election represented a number of voters more than how many citizens actually participated in the voting. This manipulation over the elections simply ignored the people's ideas and was a blow to the country's democracy. This instigated riots in



Venezuela. However, although citizens showed their lack of support for Maduro, his alliance with the military forces helped him to stay in power despite the citizens' protests.

Some foreign countries are also against Maduro's administration. More than sixty countries don't recognize his rule. Instead, they accept Juan Guaidó as the acting president of the country. But in order to officially overthrow Maduro's government, the US placed an embargo on the country. With this embargo, the US aimed to restrict Maduro's administration economically and force him to leave, which would be a step towards the solution of the political crisis in their perspective.

## Possible Solutions

In order to find a peaceful solution to the existing crisis, meetings with Maduro's side are essential. In March 2022, Maduro agreed to organize talks with the opposition ("Maduro announces resumption"). Under the moderation of the relevant UN organizations with observer states such meetings can be organized, in accordance with both sides' policies of course.

International help can also be sought while attempting to solve the crisis. For instance, Biden stated that if talks pursue, the US government will consider easing the sanctions, which was what happened this year. Easing sanctions can be a tool for coming to agreements between the parties, just like in this case. However, while writing clauses with the help of this idea, it is critical that both Venezuela's and the USA's policies are not breached.

For the upcoming elections, a more transparent voting system should be provided. It has been shown that the previous elections were subjected to manipulations in data. The opposition and the UN should find ways to work with Maduro's government to come into a consensus for the next elections' procedure.

## Bibliography

"Acting president." *Law Insider*, Law Insider. <https://www.lawinsider.com/dictionary/acting-president>.

Accessed 21 June 2022.

"Coup d'état." *Britannica*, Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/coup-detat>. Accessed 21 June 2022.





"Maduro announces resumption of talks with opposition." *France 24*, 3 Aug. 2022,

[www.france24.com/en/live-news/20220308-maduro-announces-resumption-of-talks-with-opposition](http://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20220308-maduro-announces-resumption-of-talks-with-opposition)  
. Accessed 21 June 2022.

"UN Documents for Venezuela." *Security Council Report*,

[www.securitycouncilreport.org/un-documents/venezuela/](http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un-documents/venezuela/). Accessed 21 June 2022.

"Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaidó declares himself acting president." *DW*, 23 Jan. 2019,

[www.dw.com/en/venezuelan-opposition-leader-juan-guaido-declares-himself-acting-president/a-47201512](http://www.dw.com/en/venezuelan-opposition-leader-juan-guaido-declares-himself-acting-president/a-47201512). Accessed 21 June 2022.

<https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/whats-ahead-for-venezuela/>

<https://www.caracaschronicles.com/2020/08/24/how-spain-turned-venezuela-into-a-political-throwing-knife/1912-4/>

<https://www.csis.org/analysis/can-sanctions-venezuela-be-improved>

## Appendix or Appendices

The Venezuela political crisis and US policies:

<https://sgp.fas.org/crs/row/IF10230.pdf>

The escalation of the political situation within Venezuela:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-36319877>

Nicolas Maduro's personal life and career:



[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicol%C3%A1s\\_Maduro#:~:text=In%20the%20early%201990s%2C%20he,run%20for%20president%20in%201998.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicol%C3%A1s_Maduro#:~:text=In%20the%20early%201990s%2C%20he,run%20for%20president%20in%201998.)

The Venezuelan Democratic Crisis in the eyes of the US Department of State:

<https://2017-2021.state.gov/a-democratic-crisis-in-venezuela/index.html>

