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Student Analysis—March 8, 2019

(U) Venezuela: Russian Support Critical to Maduro Regime



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(U) Russian economic and diplomatic support will likely ensure Maduro retains power through April 30, 2019, while simultaneously impeding opposition efforts to usurp the regime. The Maduro Regime is likely to maintain control of Venezuela's military, courts, and finances, despite intensified sanctions, due to Moscow's backing and protection.

- Venezuela has sought ways to avoid U.S. oil sanctions. Russia has agreed to increase trade and investment with Venezuela according to *TRT World*.ⁱ
- Russia has accused Washington of backing a coup attempt in Venezuela, officially opposes U.S. actions, and has warned against U.S. military intervention in the region according to *Reuters Venezuela*.ⁱⁱ
- On January 28, February 15, and March 1, the United States imposed a series of economic sanctions on Venezuela's oil industry and key political figures within the Maduro regime according to the U.S. State Department.ⁱⁱⁱ

(U) Maduro is likely to keep his regime intact due to Russian economic and diplomatic assistance. Maduro's hold on power relies on his ability to generate capital and curb international military intervention, which Russian support enables. Russian support has helped bypass economic sanctions and halted opposition calls for increased pressure from the international community.

- Russian owned Rosneft committed to increasing its output this year despite U.S. sanctions, and it will remain committed to Maduro's government according to multiple sources.^{iv v}
- On March 1, Maduro ordered Venezuela's state-owned oil firm's (PDVSA), Lisbon office be relocated to Moscow. This was done to protect assets from U.S. sanctions as well as foster a long term "strategic partnership" Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov told *Reuters*.^{vi}
- Russia used its veto to block the resolution calling for new presidential elections in Venezuela and unimpeded deliveries of humanitarian aid according to *AFP News*.^{vii}

(U) Maduro's administration will very likely utilize Russian support to continue procurement of resources, financial aid, and military backing. This support is likely to continue as long as Venezuela is able to meet financial obligations in repaying Russian loans.

- Maduro's continued help from Moscow indicates Russia's dedication to protect its interests in PDVSA, especially in avoiding U.S. economic sanctions according to *Xinhua*.^{viii}
- The Maduro Regime's ability to overcome the opposition was bolstered by Russia's ability to block U.N. recognition of opposition leader, Juan Guaido's government, preventing the United States and its allies from prevailing in the U.N. according to Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov.^{ix}

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- ⁱ “Guaido Calls for New Anti-Maduro Protests – Venezuela Crisis.” *The South China Sea Dispute Explained*, TRT World, 4 Mar. 2019, www.trtworld.com/americas/guaido-calls-for-new-anti-maduro-protests-venezuela-crisis-23571.
- ⁱⁱ Nichols, Michelle. “Russia, China Block U.S. Push for U.N. to Back Venezuela's Guaido.” *Reuters*, Thomson Reuters, 26 Jan. 2019, www.reuters.com/article/venezuela-politics-un/russia-china-block-u-s-push-for-u-n-to-back-venezuelas-guaido-idUKL1N1ZQ05I.
- ⁱⁱⁱ “Venezuela-Related Sanctions.” *U.S. Department of State*, U.S. Department of State, www.state.gov/e/eb/tfs/spi/venezuela/.
- ^{iv} Kurmanaev, Anatoly, and Clifford Krauss. “U.S. Sanctions Are Aimed at Venezuela's Oil. Its Citizens May Suffer First.” *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 8 Feb. 2019, www.nytimes.com/2019/02/08/world/americas/venezuela-sanctions-maduro.html.
- ^v Astrasheuskaya, Nastassia. “Rosneft Sees No Danger in Venezuela Crisis.” *Financial Times*, Financial Times, 5 Feb. 2019, www.ft.com/content/a5d10690-291f-11e9-a5ab-ff8ef2b976c7.
- ^{vi} Ivanova, Polina. “Venezuela to Move State Oil Firm PDVSA Office from Lisbon to Moscow.” *Reuters*, Thomson Reuters, 1 Mar. 2019, www.reuters.com/article/us-venezuela-politics-russia-pdvsa/venezuela-to-move-state-oil-firm-pdvsa-office-from-lisbon-to-moscow-idUSKCN1QI4BM.
- ^{vii} AFP. “Russia, China at UN Veto US Measure on Venezuela.” *Business Standard*, Business-Standard, 28 Feb. 2019, www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/russia-china-at-un-veto-us-measure-on-venezuela-119030100056_1.html.
- ^{viii} “Russian FM Conveys Putin's Support for Maduro.” *Profile: Peru's Engineer-Turned-President Martin Vizcarra - Xinhua* / *English.news.cn*, 1 Mar. 2019, www.xinhuanet.com/english/europe/2019-03/01/c_137861342.htm.
- ^{ix} *Russia Will Prevent US Intervention in Venezuela: Official*. 3 Mar. 2019, www.presstv.com/Detail/2019/03/03/590058/Venezuela-Russia-US-intervention.