

THE ATTITUDE OF LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES TOWARDS VENEZUELA'S DUAL POWER SITUATION FROM 2019 TO 2022

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ABSTRACT

The research subject of this paper is the attitude of Latin American countries towards the dual power situation in Venezuela in the period between 2019 and 2022. This period was marked by the struggle for total control over the state between the legally elected president of the republic, Nicolás Maduro, and Juan Guaidó, the self-proclaimed president of the republic, supported by the so-called collective West. The key reason the author chose this topic as the research subject was the impact that the period of dual power left not only on relations within the Latin American macro-region but also on wider international relations. The starting hypothesis of the research is that the position taken by Latin American countries regarding the recognition of the legality and legitimacy of the self-proclaimed president Juan Guaidó was directly determined by their ruling ideologies, as the right-wing governments recognised Juan Guaidó as president, i.e., terminated diplomatic relations with Nicolás Maduro's regime. The results of the research showed that the attitude of Latin American countries towards the dual government situation in Venezuela turned to a significant extent in favour of Nicolás Maduro after the so-called second pink wave, i.e., the coming of progressive political forces to power in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Peru, and Colombia. Historical and case study methods, as well as comparative analysis, were used in this research.

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Introduction

Venezuela, like all other Latin American countries, went through different periods of ups and downs during its history, alternating between phases of economic growth and prosperity and phases of internal political and economic crises. It is impossible to understand the contemporary political crisis in Venezuela, the period of dual power in it, and consequently, the attitude of Latin American countries towards the latter without at least a brief review of Chavism as a specific ideology. Its creator is Hugo Frías Chávez, and the current Venezuelan president, Nicolás Maduro, is its successor. On the other hand, there is no doubt that anti-Chavism is the ideological platform from which almost the entire contemporary Venezuelan opposition, including the self-proclaimed president Juan Guaidó, has sprung. The ideology of Chavism is often called the Latin American socialism of the 21st century in the Venezuelan experience. It is a typical Latin American left-wing, sovereignist, and anti-imperialist ideology based on the principles of participatory democracy, state interventionism in economic affairs, and various models of regional Latin American integration. In addition, Chavism also contains an ideological component that concerns the feminist and ecological emancipation of the Venezuelan population. There is no doubt that the main characteristic of Chavism is to express anti-Americanism, i.e., opposition to the political, economic, and any other interests of the United States (US) in Venezuela, whose policy not only towards Venezuela but also towards Latin America in general is perceived as neo-colonialism. Chavism perceives international economic institutions (such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank) and multinational companies in the same way—only as one of the forms of exploitation of Venezuelan workers and natural resources by the official Washington. Consequently, Chavism, although it does not defend private ownership, insists on building a strong national economy through the nationalisation of key companies, especially those involved in the production of oil and its derivatives. The policy of helping the poorest and most vulnerable social categories has also been one of the pillars of Chavism since its inception, and it is interpreted in two ways. Firstly, in the economic sense, through the redistributive policy of the state towards the observed categories of the population, the construction of free-of-charge apartments, etc. Secondly, in the political sense, through the political literacy of the population. In that sense, the free distribution of tablets, the organisation of the so-called “Bolivarian Missions” (a series of programmes for social justice, social welfare, and anti-poverty strategy), the reform of the educational and electoral systems, a new military recruiting programme, as well as the creation of tens of millions of pocket constitutions in Venezuela, were particularly impressive. In that way, every Venezuelan could exercise their rights at any time. Here, we should definitely add the emancipation of the indigenous population,

which Chávez, as a sworn enemy of the Spanish conquest of Latin America, particularly insisted on.

The afore-mentioned pillars of socioeconomic development and political emancipation advocated by Chavism were put into practice after the outbreak of one of the most significant events in the history of Venezuela: the Bolivarian Revolution, which began on February 2, 1999, and continues officially until today. It is a process that has fundamentally altered Venezuela's political and economic landscape and was brought about by the previous administration's neoliberal policies, which served only the interests of powerful multinational corporations at the expense of millions of disenfranchised and impoverished Venezuelans. The main task of the Bolivarian Revolution was the protection of national wealth through the nationalisation of strategically important companies, the prohibition of their further privatisation, and the introduction of a more socially just and responsible redistributive state policy in favour of the general population. Hugo Frías Chávez came to power in 1998 through peaceful elections. However, we should not forget that he tried to overthrow the Venezuelan government in 1992, leading a group of conspiratorial officers and later being arrested. The Bolivarian revolution implied, among other things, the application of a revolutionary economic development model, which included programmes such as the "Bolívar Plan" and "Lands Law" as the basic elements of so-called nutrition security. All these represented a pillar of the strategy against poverty that also involved healthcare, environmental issues related to a better life, and the development of rural zones, housing, education, etc. It is important to distinguish between the initial ideas of the Bolivarian Revolution and the concept of 21st-century socialism developed by the German sociologist Heinz Dieterich Steffan. This concept implies the so-called fourth development phase of socialism, which defends the application of the mixed economy model and advocates for adequate valuation of work as the ultimate goal to prevent abuse of workers (Dieterich Steffan 2003). The term "socialism of the 21st century" became widely used after Hugo Chávez Frías mentioned it at the Fifth World Social Forum in 2005.

It is impossible to understand either the Bolivarian Revolution or the concept of 21st-century socialism without understanding the basic principles of Venezuela's foreign policy from the beginning of this century. The foreign policy course of Chavism is rigid and closed when it comes to the attitude towards the allegedly hostile and neo-colonial ambitions of the collective West. At the same time, it is completely and uncritically open to cooperation with "challenger countries" of the United States like China, Russia, and Iran, and recently also towards rising regional powers like Turkey. On the other hand, anti-Chavists charge that both Hugo Chávez's and Nicolás Maduro's regimes are oppressive, communist, anti-democratic, isolationist, and violate human rights.

They also claim that the Maduro regime stifled opposition activity, drove millions of Venezuelans into poverty and misery, and violated human rights while the ruling caste became increasingly wealthy (Петровић 2020, 49–52).

During the Chavist period, foreign policy was changed dramatically, ideologically redefined, and intensified on regional and international-global levels. This platform was conceived in the belief that Venezuela could be one of the main regional actors in the new geo-strategy of the world at the beginning of the 21st century, particularly due to its enormous natural resources: oil and natural gas. This pattern is fundamental for understanding Venezuelan international bilateral or multilateral activities with OPEC, China, Russia, India, South Africa, or Arab countries like Libya, Iraq, or Iran. Bearing in mind that Venezuelan foreign policy was openly anti-American, it is easy to understand the worries of official Washington concerning the security agenda of the world in general and Latin America in particular.

Theoretical Framework: From Diarchy and Duumvirate to Modern Dual Power

The problem of dual power is something that human society has faced since ancient times. Thus, the Ancient Greeks used the term diarchy (Διαρχία), and the Ancient Romans used the term duumvirate (duumviratus) to indicate a situation in which two people have power over the same territory and at the same time, regardless of whether they mutually recognise each other. Modern history also provides a few examples of diarchy, where one should distinguish between those that were or are still agreed upon and institutionalised in character and those that existed during and after civil wars and other conflicts. Thus, in 1919, when the Government of India Act was adopted, a diarchy was officially established on the Indian subcontinent, and the British crown voluntarily distributed part of its sovereignty to Indian provinces and ministers (Legg 2016, 44). According to the letter of its constitution, Andorra is even today a co-principality because the function of the head of state is performed simultaneously by the President of France and the Bishop of Urgell (Emerson 2007, 38). In San Marino, power is also exercised by two persons, i.e., the Captains Regent, elected by the local parliament every six months (Olei and Giusti 2013, 1-6). After the coup d'état in Bolivia in 1964 and until 1966, power was exercised in the form of co-presidency by two generals, René Barrientos and Ovando Candía (Aguiló 1993, 2).

There were many examples of dual governments where two rulers did not recognise each other. Such was the case in Yugoslavia during the Second World War, when the communist leader Josip Broz Tito and King Petar II Karađorđević presented themselves as the holders of power. The same thing happened during

the Spanish Civil War, but also after it, when the Francoist regime, led by Francisco Franco, and the republican government of Manuel Azaña fought for power. Furthermore, the Spanish Republic's government-in-exile functioned until 1977 (Ferrer Benimeli 1977, 4-19). One of the first to raise the problem of dual power in a theoretical sense was Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, who, after returning from exile in Russia, wrote the famous article "Dual Power" (Dvoevlastie) in 1917, where he primarily dealt with the problem of the collapse of the old tsarist power and the establishment of a new communist one, arguing that the fundamental problem of any revolution is the problem of state power (Hasegawa 1972, 611). After the 1917 revolution in Russia, there was a dual government between the Council of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies on the one hand and the Provisional Government, which lasted from March to July of that year (Юсупова и Синицын 2017, 162) on the other.

The above-elaborated theoretical framework will be extremely important for understanding the political crisis in Venezuela because the period in which Juan Guaidó and Nicolás Maduro shared political power in this country can be regarded as a period of dual power. Given the specifics of the Venezuelan dual power crisis, we used the case study method in the research to explain it in more detail. The historical method helped analyse the origin and development of the political crisis in Venezuela and the broader historical context in which the Venezuelan state and society developed with their specific problems and challenges. The method of comparative analysis was an indispensable methodological tool that served to compare the approaches of each Latin American country to the Venezuelan crisis caused by the dual power.

The Venezuelan Political Crisis and the Self-Proclamation of Juan Guaidó as President

After the death of Hugo Chávez in 2013, Nicolás Maduro became the president of Venezuela. He defeated the opposition candidate, Henrique Capriles Radonski, in the presidential elections. However, the opposition forces, of which the Democratic Unity Roundtable was the loudest and most influential, claimed that the elections were rigged and marked by a series of irregularities, including threats and the theft of votes. At the beginning of 2014, the arrest of two of the most popular opposition leaders at the time, Leopoldo López and Antonio Ledezma, showed that Venezuela had also entered a political crisis, in addition to the already present economic crisis marked by hyperinflation and a shortage of some basic foods. However, this did not prevent the opposition from winning the parliamentary elections in 2015 and controlling the majority of seats in the national parliament on a wave of widespread discontent among Venezuelan citizens. The situation became even more complicated in 2017,

when Nicolás Maduro and the Supreme Court set out to completely sabotage the work of the parliament, culminating in elections for the Constituent Assembly in which opposition parties did not participate. In 2018, the presidential election followed, in which Nicolás Maduro won a convincing victory with 67.8% of the votes. After the election, both the opposition parties in Venezuela and the entire collective West began to call the Venezuelan president a dictator and challenged his legality and legitimacy. It is possible, therefore, to define several causes of the political crisis in Venezuela that escalated in 2019 with a dual government. The first cause was Hugo Chávez's death and Nicolás Maduro's struggle to maintain his authority. The second was the outbreak of the Venezuelan economic crisis, caused by the drop in oil prices on the world market. The third cause was the convincing victory of the opposition in the 2015 parliamentary elections. The fourth was Donald Trump's coming to power in the United States (as an extremely anti-Chavista president). Finally, the fifth cause was the coming to power of right-wingers throughout Latin America in the observed period, which reversed the tendency of leftists coming to power in the first decade of the 21st century, known as the "pink tide" (Tpanapa 2021, 146). Likewise, it is possible to identify the main actors in the presidential crisis in Venezuela. Nicolás Maduro is the first one, along with the entire Chavist military, political, and economic-financial elite of the state-owned oil industry and paramilitary forces. The second actor is Juan Guaidó, the self-proclaimed president around whom the entire Venezuelan opposition gathered. Countries that recognised Juan Guaidó as president, led by the United States at the global level and Brazil at the regional level, also represent a specific group of actors in this crisis. The fourth are those countries that firmly supported Nicolás Maduro as president of Venezuela, led by Russia, China, Iran, and Turkey at the global level and Mexico, Cuba, and Nicaragua at the regional level. Countries like Colombia, Uruguay, and Bolivia did not accept the credentials of the ambassadors appointed by Guaidó. Argentina first accepted the ambassador appointed by Guaidó but soon denied him credentials and continued to hold regular diplomatic relations with the Maduro government (Tpanapa 2021, 146-147).

On January 23, 2019, Juan Guaidó, a young engineer who was educated in the United States and who previously held the position of president of the Venezuelan parliament, declared himself the interim president of Venezuela, thus officially beginning the period of two governments in this Latin American country. Guaido tried to justify such a decision by referring to Article 233 of the Constitution of Venezuela, according to which the president of the assembly has the right to temporarily take over the office of the president of the republic in extraordinary cases (Constitution of Venezuela 1999, 274-275). Despite the fact that the official state institutions rejected such a move, describing it as a

coup d'état, Guaidó's political strength was the international support he had received. He was recognised by 54 countries around the world, and the greatest support came from the US State Department. His strength was also represented by tens of thousands of disaffected Venezuelans who protested almost daily on the streets of Caracas, often clashing with the police and paramilitary formations loyal to Maduro. On the other hand, the Supreme Court of Venezuela made a decision to ban Juan Guaidó from leaving the country and freeze his assets. However, Guaidó left the country for neighbouring Colombia, allegedly to meet the participants of an international conference about the political situation in Venezuela. Hours after he arrived in Bogota, Colombia's government reacted by escorting Guaidó on a plane to the US. Caracas reacted by closing its borders with neighbouring Brazil and Colombia, despite the imminent humanitarian disaster amid US sanctions and shortages of food and medicine. In April 2019, the number of Venezuelans living in poverty reached 90%, and as many as seven million of them needed some kind of humanitarian aid. An additional problem was the fact that around 4.3 million of its citizens have left Venezuela since 2015 (Petrović 2020, 23).

In order to better understand the Venezuelan political crisis, it is necessary, in addition to its political causes and factors, to explain in more detail the position of the army as an important socio-political factor and the economic situation in the country itself. It is necessary to point out again the previously mentioned plans, the "Bolívar Plan" and the so-called "Land Law", because they represented the legal basis for the inclusion of the army in the revolutionary process, its participation in numerous social initiatives, and the right to vote, which further legitimised and strengthened its reputation in the country. For example, Chávez personally insisted on the participation of the army in the implementation. The army in Venezuela, which numbers around 350,000 members and represents one of the most respectable regional military forces, has exerted a strong influence on political and social trends in the country and even on economic conditions, civil society, mass media, and the judicial branch of government in the last two decades (Jácome 2018, 119-120). Vladimir Padrino, General and Minister of Defence of Venezuela, was one of the most influential figures in the social and political life of this country, and that is why his support for Nicolás Maduro in 2019, after Juan Guaido declared himself president, was perhaps decisive. Padrino, as well as much of the rest of the Venezuelan military elite, is considered a hard-line Chavista, so it is not surprising that the Venezuelan military has not only withheld any support for Guaidó (given that the president of the republic is formally the supreme commander of the armed forces) but has also participated in breaking up demonstrations organised by his supporters (Petrović 2020, 25). On the other hand, the effects of the economic crisis in Venezuela in 2019 were devastating. At the time,

Venezuela did not have access to essential imported goods such as raw materials, medical supplies, and food, which plunged the country into an unprecedented humanitarian crisis. More than ten billion dollars of Venezuelan money abroad was frozen, and due to economic sanctions in the first six months of 2019, Venezuelan oil production decreased by 20,500 barrels per day on average (Petrović 2020, 25).

The First Reactions of Latin American Countries to Dual Power in Venezuela

A day after Juan Guaidó declared himself the president of Venezuela, we had a fairly clear picture of which countries would recognise his legality and legitimacy and which would openly side with Maduro's regime and express their support for him. Only two countries took an officially neutral position: Italy (including the Vatican as a dwarf country) and Norway. The official position of Japan and Ireland was that it was necessary to call for new presidential elections. Many countries did not officially side with Nicolás Maduro but refused to recognise the self-proclaimed president, Guaidó. Those countries continued regular diplomatic communication, that is, bilateral relations with the official Caracas, such as Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, Montenegro, Slovenia, Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, and Moldova in Europe, and from other parts of the world, India, Pakistan, Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Libya, Morocco, Angola, the Republic of South Africa, New Zealand, and others. The countries that directly supported Maduro's regime, many of them very heartily and vigorously, were Russia, China, Turkey, Iran, Indonesia, Egypt, Syria, Belarus, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Laos, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Kenya, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and Namibia. On the other hand, the countries that recognised Juan Guaidó as the president of Venezuela were the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Portugal, Spain, France, Switzerland, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Germany, Austria, Denmark, Sweden, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Croatia, North Macedonia, Greece, so-called Kosovo, Ukraine, Georgia, Israel, and Australia (Rodríguez Martínez 2019).

It is necessary to look in more detail at the initial positions of Latin American countries regarding the self-proclamation of Juan Guaidó as the president of Venezuela. First, it is important to explain what the term Latin American country means in theory and practice, and then to explain why their stance on the issue of dual power in Venezuela was of exceptional importance for that country. Latin America is a compact territorial entity bounded by the Rio Grande River in the north, the Strait of Magellan in the south, the Pacific Ocean in the west,

and the Atlantic Ocean in the east. The three island countries in the Caribbean—Cuba, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic—should also be added to this entity. It should be noted here that the Panama Canal separates Central and South America as a subregion that, together with the Caribbean, is part of the Latin American macroregion. It is, therefore, a group of 20 countries in which the official language is one of the Latin or Romance languages (Spanish, Portuguese, or French) and English, and which Samuel Huntington, in his famous study “The Clash of Civilizations”, designated as a separate Latin American civilization. Latin America, as a broad and generally accepted concept with numerous differences existing in cohabitation and interaction, should be distinguished from related terms such as Hispanic America, which includes countries located on the American continents whose official language is Spanish, and Ibero-America, the afore-mentioned countries plus Brazil, where Portuguese is the official language (Петровић 2023, 5-6). For Venezuela, other Latin American countries are not only important because of shared common historical and socio-political heritage (the arrival of European colonizers, the implantation of the Iberian feudal model of socio-economic, cultural and religious development, the struggle for liberation and liberal emancipation in the 19th century, caudillism, sharp polarization on the left and right political spectrum, etc.), but also because with some of them Venezuela forms an integral part of certain forms of political and economic integration within Latin America, such as MERCOSUR (Venezuela’s membership was suspended in 2017 due to violations of trade and human rights standards), UNASUR (besides Venezuela, only Bolivia, Surinam and Guyana) remained members), ALADI, CELAC, ALBA, CARICOM, and SELA (Петровић 2023, 18-26).

The Latin American countries that immediately and officially supported the Nicolás Maduro regime were Mexico, Nicaragua, Cuba, El Salvador, and Bolivia. Only Uruguay abstained (calling for new presidential elections), so the remaining Latin American countries directly and unequivocally supported Juan Guaidó as the legal and legitimate president of Venezuela: Guatemala, Honduras, Costa Rica, Panama, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Brazil, Paraguay, Argentina, and Chile. The ideological factor played a decisive role in whether a Latin American country will recognise Juan Guaidó or Nicolás Maduro, i.e., whether the observed country was governed by the left or the right-wing president, given that Maduro’s regime was socialist, bolivarian, and anti-American while Guaidó was a leader of the neoliberal and pro-American right.

Right after the self-proclamation of Juan Guaido as president, Mexico issued an official statement that it will remain committed to bilateral relations with the legitimately elected president, Maduro, and other Venezuelan institutions. Mexico also emphasised non-interference in the internal affairs of Venezuela and expressed a desire to help overcome the tensions in that country if the

official Caracas deemed it appropriate (*Reuters* 2019a). Mexico's position was not surprising, given the fact that the leftist Andrés Manuel López Obrador was in power at the time, and his foreign policy implied Latin American solidarity and the fight against neo-imperialism and neo-colonialism in the broader Latin American space embodied in neoliberalism and the United States (Kuri and García Fernández 2021, 14). On the other hand, Mexico, led by López Obrador, persistently tried to profile itself as a regional political and economic leader but also as a protector of the interests of other Latin American countries and Latin America as a macroregion on the international level (Петровић 2023, 754).

Nicaragua, where the left-wing Sandinistas led by President Daniel Ortega have been in power since 2006, has also very clearly and publicly spoken in favour of Nicolás Maduro's regime. Ortega had excellent relations with Hugo Chávez and considered Maduro his legitimate successor in the fight to preserve the sovereignty of Venezuela, but also in the fight against the imperialism and neocolonialism of the United States in the observed area. Since Nicaragua was under the complete political control of the official Washington until the famous Sandinista revolution in 1979, with Anastasio Somoza's regime as its extended arm, and under the economic control of the American multinational corporations, for Ortega, the continuation of diplomatic and all other relations with the official Caracas represented a question of loyalty to the idea of Augusto Sandino, a fighter against American influence in Nicaragua during the 1920s and 1930s (*Spanish.xinhuanet.com* 2019). On April 30, 2019, with 72 votes in favour, the Nicaraguan Parliament adopted a declaration expressing support for the government of Venezuela and condemning the coup attempt through the self-proclamation of Juan Guaidó as president, where the latter was seen as a provocation against the legal order and peace of Venezuela, as well as its overall stability (*Sputnik* 2019).

Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel had a similar attitude towards the political crisis in Venezuela. Ever since the time of Fidel and Raul Castro, the communist regime in Havana has built excellent relations with the ideologically related Chavists in Venezuela, which later spilled over into cooperation with the Madurists. The large number of murals throughout Havana dedicated to Hugo Chávez as one of the "eternal commanders" and a fighter for the place of all Latin Americans in the world of equals speaks volumes about the great sympathy that Venezuela enjoys within Cuban society. Cuban President Díaz-Canel already expressed unreserved support for Maduro's regime in the first days of the Venezuelan dual government. That was expected since the Cuban public has long perceived the opposition in Venezuela as direct American agents working against the interests of their own country. Juan Guaidó, on the other hand, did not remain in debt to Díaz-Canelo. In April 2019, Guaidó told Díaz-Canelo with pleasure that, thanks to the new package of American sanctions, the delivery of

Venezuelan oil to Cuba and the continuation of financing Cuban intelligence on Venezuelan soil would be prevented. Actually, that was connected to the old thesis of the Venezuelan opposition that the Cuban intelligence service was deeply infiltrated into Venezuela's political and military elite and that, in this way, the official Havana conducted not only the foreign but also the internal politics of Venezuela. Meanwhile, Cuba condemned the new sanctions imposed by the United States on Venezuela, characterising them as an act of extraterritoriality and imperial arrogance (*La Estrella de Panamá* 2019).

The regime of Evo Morales in Bolivia also expressly sided with Nicolás Maduro, given the ideological closeness of the Evists on the one hand and the Chavists, that is, the Madurists, on the other. Morales, known as a fierce critic of the United States of America and the man who expelled the American ambassador from his country, saw in Juan Guaidó's self-proclamation an attempt by Western imperialism to mortally wound Latin American democracies. Calling Nicolás Maduro his brother, during a public address to the nation regarding the crisis in Venezuela, Morales called on the country to stand in solidarity with the Venezuelan people and said that neither Venezuela nor Bolivia would ever be the backyard of the United States (*Europa Press* 2019a). Two years earlier, Morales travelled to Caracas to participate in a world forum in solidarity with Venezuela to show support for Maduro's regime. Then, in his speech, Morales said that he had an obligation to attend that meeting in order to contribute to the defence of the Bolivarian revolution (*Associated Press* 2017).

In January 2019, i.e., at the time when Juan Guaidó declared himself the president of Venezuela, Salvador Sánchez Cerén from the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front was the president in El Salvador, who, together with the entire Salvadoran government, supported Nicolás Maduro as the only legitimate and legally elected president of Venezuela. In order to understand why El Salvador, along with Nicaragua, was the only Central American country that supported Maduro and not Guaidó, we must briefly look at the origins and ideological characteristics of the afore-mentioned Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front. We are talking about a left-wing, i.e., Marxist-Leninist political movement that was created in 1992 after the end of the Salvadoran Civil War on the ruins of the former guerrilla group of the same name, which fought against the right-wing regime in San Salvador, considering it a puppet of American imperialism and hegemony. Therefore, it is not surprising that Sánchez Cerén supported Maduro for obvious ideological reasons and wider Latin American solidarity, but also because Maduro was always on the side of the Salvadoran Farabundists. On January 24, the Salvadoran president confirmed his support for Maduro's regime through a short press release and called for dialogue as the only solution to overcome the Venezuelan crisis. The official statement of the Salvadoran president stated that El Salvador did not recognise

Juan Guaidó as the president of Venezuela and completely rejected his self-proclamation to that position (*elsalvador.com* 2019).

Uruguay was the only Latin American country that took a neutral position at the beginning of the Venezuelan dual power crisis. This policy of the then president of Uruguay, Tabaré Vázquez, a moderate leftist from the Broad Front, can be explained by the fact that his pacifist image did not allow him to be a factor that would further deepen the already tense political crisis in Venezuela. Across Latin America, Uruguay is considered one of the “most European” Latin American countries, often referred to as the “Latin American Switzerland” due to its extremely liberal public policies, but also a high degree of political stability, democratic political culture, and socioeconomic well-being (Петровић 2023, 150-151). That is why Guaidó expected Uruguayan support, and, given that it was absent, he sent a public letter to Tabaré Vázquez in which he told him that being neutral in the case of the Venezuelan crisis meant taking the side of those who were able to persecute, torture, and kill. Uruguay, however, maintained its position, advocating for overcoming the crisis through dialogue, which it demonstrated in action by organising a round table dedicated to the Venezuelan crisis in Montevideo, as well as being part of a contact group that enabled Venezuela to communicate with certain European countries (*El Observador* 2019).

Guatemala, led by President Jimmy Morales from the right-wing National Convergence Front, recognised Juan Guaidó as the president of Venezuela on January 23, 2019, i.e., the same day Guaidó declared himself president. The Guatemalan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, on behalf of the entire government, announced that Guatemala firmly stands with Guaidó, recognises his legitimacy, and sees him as a political figure who will lead Venezuela in the direction of full and true democratisation. In that vein, President Morales briefly wrote on his Twitter profile that Guatemala would always be with the Venezuelan people (*Diario de Centro América* 2019). If we analyse the programmatic principles of the then-ruling National Convergence Front, we will see that it is a right-wing and conservative political party founded by a group of retired Guatemalan officers who, during the Guatemalan Civil War (1960-1996), were on the side of the far-right regime supported by American multinational companies like the United Fruit Company (Петровић 2023, 683-685). Accordingly, the express decision of the official Guatemala City to support Juan Guaidó and thus join the countries of the collective West was not at all surprising.

Honduras also recognised Juan Guaidó as the president of Venezuela on January 23, 2019, when the then-president, Juan Orlando Hernández, informed the Honduran parliament that Honduras, as a member of the Lima Group, agreed with its declaration on the recognition of Guaidó as the legitimate president of Venezuela. Namely, the Lima Group is a multilateral body founded

in the Peruvian capital in 2017 in order to find a peaceful way out of the Venezuelan crisis. Its 11 members (Honduras, Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Panama, Paraguay, and Peru) adopted the Lima Group Declaration proclaiming the following: Juan Guaidó is recognised as the president of Venezuela within the framework of its constitution and laws against the illegal regime of Nicolás Maduro; it supports the start of a democratic transition in Venezuela that will result in the organisation of presidential elections as soon as possible; it calls for the establishment of the rule of law with the support of the international community that will condemn the violence committed in Venezuela; and it expresses further firm support for the return of democracy in Venezuela (*Notibomba* 2019). Here, we also have to mention the existence of the so-called Group from Puebla (founded in 2019) as a political-academic forum of the progressive forces of the region. In this case too, the ideological moment was one of the most crucial, given that the National Party of Honduras, to which President Hernández belonged, is a conservative, neoliberal, and anti-communist party that traditionally condemns all left-wing regimes in Latin America.

Costa Rica did not wait long to choose the side in the issue of dual power in Venezuela, and, as a member of the Lima Group, it decided to support Juan Guaidó on January 23, 2019. The then-Costa Rican President Carlos Alvarado said in an official statement that Costa Rica recognises the declaration of Juan Guaidó as the President of Venezuela and advocates dialogue, peace, and new free elections. Soon, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Costa Rica announced its support for the efforts of the legitimately elected Venezuelan National Assembly to follow the path of transition towards the realisation of free, fair, and transparent presidential elections in accordance with international standards and the Constitution of Venezuela (Madrigal 2019). Although President Alvarado belonged to the social-democratic and pacifist Citizens' Action Party, this move by the official San Jose was not a surprise. On the contrary, it was expected, considering the close foreign policy and security ties between Costa Rica and the United States. This small Central American country has not had its own army since 1949, as the security of Costa Ricans was the US Marines' responsibility (Петровић 2023, 536), and it was the first country to recognise the independence of the so-called Kosovo in 2008.

Panama also recognised Juan Guaidó as president on January 23, and its leadership, led by Juan Carlos Varela, informed the public that it accepted the conclusions of the Lima Group Declaration. Therefore, it condemned the regime of Nicolás Maduro and supported Juan Guaidó as president (Hall 2019). This Central American country is of exceptional geostrategic and geoeconomic importance due to the Panama Canal, and it has been relying on foreign policy cooperation with the United States for a whole century. The then Panamanian

President Varela belonged to the Panamist Party, the oldest relevant political party in Panama, whose ideological platform was based on conservatism, nationalism, and neoliberalism in the economic sphere (Петровић 2023, 487). Consequently, in the case of Panama's recognition of the legality and legitimacy of Juan Guaidó, we can find ideological motives.

A few days after Juan Guaidó's self-proclamation, Haiti joined the group of Latin American countries that supported his move and condemned Maduro's regime for organising illegitimate elections and suppressing opposition activities and democratic institutions in the country. The Haitian parliament announced that Haitians and Venezuelans have fraternal and historical ties and that the authorities in Port-au-Prince want the political crisis in Venezuela to be resolved peacefully and through dialogue (*Haiti Libre* 2019). The then-president of Haiti, Jovenel Moïse, for whom the Haitian opposition claimed that he was backed by the United States and who was assassinated in 2021, came from the ranks of the Haitian Tèt Kale Party, a neoliberal and pro-American centre-right party often critical of left-wing regimes in the region, although, truth be told, it had good relations with neighbouring Cuba.

The Dominican Republic approached the phenomenon of dual governments in Venezuela in a specific way. Namely, on January 24, 2019, the government of this country publicly announced that it did not recognise the second presidential term of Nicolás Maduro but refused to state whether it recognised Juan Guaidó as the legitimate and legal president of Venezuela. The official Santo Domingo used the opportunity to reiterate its position that it was necessary to organise fair elections in Venezuela as soon as possible and give its citizens the opportunity to find a peaceful and democratic way out of the deep political crisis (*Europa Press* 2019c). Soon, however, a new official announcement came out, according to which the Dominican Republic recognised Juan Guaidó as the president of Venezuela (*Dominican Today* 2019).

At the time when the political crisis broke out in neighbouring Venezuela, Colombia was the only Latin American country where the left never came to power. Accordingly, this country is traditionally considered the most important and loyal ally of the State Department in the observed area and, as a rule, follows its foreign policy. Also, it is important to underline that Colombia is officially the "global partner" of NATO and the only Latin American country to achieve that status. On January 23, 2019, the Colombian government led by Iván Duque recognised Juan Guaidó as a legal and legitimate president. Duque, who was at the World Economic Forum in Davos at the time, said that his country was standing firmly behind Juan Guaidó and strongly supported the transition to democracy that would bring freedom from dictatorship to the citizens of Venezuela (*Reuters* 2019b). Of course, this kind of express support for Guaidó by official Bogotá was not a surprise. Actually, it was expected since

relations between the two neighbouring countries had already been significantly damaged for years. Thus, for a long time, Venezuela and Colombia have been accusing each other of the transfer of military and paramilitary formations from one country to another, which culminated in the massacre in Tachira on October 24, 2009, when unknown paramilitary troops invaded Venezuela from the direction of Colombia and killed 11 and wounded one peanut farmer (Петровић 2023, 408). On the other hand, it is an open secret that Maduro's regime supported the paramilitary guerilla formations of the National Liberation Army as the only remaining Marxist-Leninist group that refused to obey the government in Bogota (Petrović 2021a, 198). How firmly the Colombian government was on Guaidó's side at the time was also shown by the fact that he had attended one of the rallies in Colombia in support of Venezuela in February 2019, organised by right-wing Latin American leaders, despite the fact that the Venezuelan authorities forbade him to cross the border (BBC 2019).

Ecuadorian President Lenin Moreno, a former leftist who soon after taking power transformed into a rightist and neoliberal in economic terms and was firmly tied to the United States (Петровић 2023, 343-344), also expressly recognised the legitimacy of Juan Guaidó on January 23, 2019. At the same time, Moreno called for free and democratic elections to restore peace and a sense of brotherhood among Venezuelans. In his video announcement from the World Economic Forum in Davos, he expressed his hope for new transparent elections and a new era of democratic development and prosperity in Venezuela. Although it does not border Venezuela, Ecuador had received several thousand Venezuelan refugees until then. (Reuters 2019c).

Peruvian President Martín Vizcarra followed the same path, and on January 23, 2019, he also recognised Juan Guaidó as the legitimately elected president of Venezuela. In the press release of the Peruvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it was announced that the process of democratic transition in Venezuela will be developed in a peaceful and transparent manner while respecting the constitutional guarantee and fundamental rights of all Venezuelans. The hope was also expressed that new elections would be organised as soon as possible (Reuters 2019d). Vizcarra, as a president who was not a member of any political party during his presidential term, somewhat surprised the Peruvian and Latin American public with the decision to recognise Juan Guaidó, considering that only a year before he entered into conflict with the Peruvian opposition (which had a strong majority in the congress) because he disagreed with the decision of the previous Peruvian president Pedro Pablo Kuczynski to ban the arrival of Nicolás Maduro to the regional summit in Lima (Reuters 2018).

In 2019, Brazil supported Juan Guaidó most decisively and energetically. Namely, in the middle of January 2019, before the official "inauguration" of

Juan Guaidó, the official Brasilia recognised him as the legitimate president of Venezuela. It was, therefore, at a time when Guaidó himself said that he was only preparing to take over the position of president, that is, while he was still formally at the head of the Venezuelan Congress (*Reuters* 2019e). Moreover, Guaidó arrived in Brasilia on January 28, 2019, to meet with Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro as well as representatives of the European Union. The aim of this visit was, among other things, to ask for humanitarian aid from Brazil. Guaidó also asked Columbia for humanitarian aid a few days earlier at a meeting with US Vice President Mike Pence during his visit to that country (*Voice of America* 2019). The ultra-right Brazilian president at the time, Jair Bolsonaro, with strong anti-communist and neoliberal views, was the fiercest critic of Nicolás Maduro. Bolsonaro showed what attitude he would have towards the regime in Caracas at his inauguration as President of Brazil at the end of 2018, when he did not invite Maduro. Moreover, Bolsonaro's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ernesto Araujo, directly lobbied foreign diplomats to free Venezuela from Maduro. Even Bolsonaro's son Eduardo was directly involved in helping the Venezuelan right-wing opposition oust Maduro, for whom he said it would be best to leave the country (Phillips 2018).

Mario Abdo Benítez, the then right-wing president of Paraguay and the son of a former close associate of Paraguayan dictator Alfredo Stroessner, recognised Juan Guaidó as the president of Venezuela on January 23, 2019. He added on his Twitter account that Guaidó can count on Paraguay to build a free and democratic society (*Europa Press* 2019b). Once again, the ideological moment played an important role in choosing one of the two sides in Venezuela, given that Abdo Benítez came from the ranks of the Colorado Party, a right-wing nationalist and anti-communist option. The fact that Paraguay is one of the few countries today that recognises the so-called Republic of China (Taiwan) and has no diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China shows how close it is to the foreign policy of the United States.

The Argentine government, led by Mauricio Macri, a neoliberal and right-winger with distinct anti-Peronist, i.e., anti-leftist sentiments, officially recognised Juan Guaidó as the president of Venezuela on January 23, 2019. President Macri stated that Argentina would continue to support the democratisation of Venezuela. He also emphasised respect for human rights in that fraternal country and the return of conditions for a dignified life for all Venezuelans. On this occasion, President Macri spoke on his Twitter account, expressing his support for the election of Juan Guaidó as president and his belief that Argentina has embarked on a path of democratisation that will result in holding free and fair elections in which the opposition parties will also participate (Lejtman 2019). A few months later, Argentina went a step further by appointing Elis Trotta, Juan Guaidó's representative, as Venezuela's

ambassador to Argentina. This decision by Mauricio Macri should be interpreted as his pre-election marketing move, with which he wanted to gather around himself the entire Argentine anti-Peronist right, but also to gain international sympathy (*France 24* 2019).

Finally, Chile, led by rightist Sebastián Piñera at the time, recognised Juan Guaidó as the legal and legitimate Venezuelan president and further progress towards the full return of democracy in Venezuela as an important mission. Piñera, marking Venezuela as a brotherly country, emphasised that it was important to facilitate the return of the rule of law and civil liberties. Judging by the Chilean president's official announcement at the time, it was of crucial importance to insist on free, regular, and transparent democratic elections in Venezuela, denoting Nicolás Maduro as part of the problem, not the solution. Finally, Piñera requested the release of all Venezuelan political prisoners and the opening of a humanitarian corridor to deliver aid to Venezuelan citizens in food, medicine, and other necessities (*La Tercera* 2019). Ever since Augusto Pinochet came to power in 1973 through a military coup, Chile has been considered the most liberal country in Latin America in economic terms, where sectors such as education, healthcare, etc. have been privatised (Петровић 2023, 83). As such, Chile has been one of the greatest critics of socialist regimes throughout the region for many years, but it was also a source of growing discontent among leftists who wanted more social justice in this country. Thus, in October 2019, Piñera faced the huge dissatisfaction of millions of Chileans who protested for days on the streets of Santiago de Chile and all over the country, demanding the adoption of a new constitution. A public opinion survey showed that Piñera enjoyed the support of only 11% of Chileans (Petrović 2021b, 150).

The Second Pink Tide and Changes in the Attitudes of Latin American Countries on the Question of Dual Power in Venezuela

The years that followed the outbreak of the political crisis in Venezuela, which culminated in the self-proclamation of Juan Guaidó as the president of Venezuela and the de facto emergence of a dual government in Venezuela, showed that the internal political dynamics in the countries of Latin America directly affected their attitude towards Nicolás Maduro and Juan Guaidó. The results of our research clearly show that in those Latin American countries where the left came to power, Nicolás Maduro was recognised as the legal and legitimate president of Venezuela. From the end of 2019 to 2022, we can talk about the "second pink tide" in Latin America since progressive parties came to power in the five largest Latin American countries. In addition to Mexico (the

president of which is López Obrador since 2018), the leftists won power in Argentina, Brazil, Peru, Colombia, Chile, and Honduras (Arellano 2022, 76).

At the end of 2019, Alejandro Giamattei won the presidential elections in Guatemala as the candidate of Vamos, a conservative political party with neoliberal economic views. At the beginning of 2020, Giamattei announced that he had made the decision that Guatemala would definitively end all diplomatic relations with Venezuela, as evidenced by the closure of the Venezuelan embassy in Ciudad de Guatemala. Although the previous president of Guatemala, Jimmy Morales, as already explained, recognised Juan Guaidó as the president of Venezuela, the Venezuelan ambassador to Guatemala, appointed by Nicolás Maduro, was not denied hospitality. In this sense, we can say that the new Guatemalan right-wing president has taken a step further in supporting Juan Guaidó and the Venezuelan opposition as a whole (García Hernández 2020).

After the coup organised by the Bolivian right-wing opposition, with the support of the army and the police, Jeanine Áñez took power from Evo Morales, who was forced to flee to Mexico. Jeanine Áñez came to power as a temporary solution until the new presidential elections. One of Áñez's first foreign policy moves was to cut relations with the regime of Nicolás Maduro, very close to the former Evist regime, and to recognise Juan Guaidó as the legitimate president of Venezuela. Nicolás Maduro called the events in Bolivia a coup d'état, and the ruling United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) organised a protest march on the streets of Caracas in support of Evo Morales. On the other hand, Juan Guaidó said that a "breath of freedom" was felt in Venezuela after Morales fell from power (*Infobae* 2019). However, the new presidential elections in Bolivia in 2020 were won by Juan Arce from the ranks of the Movement towards Socialism (MAS), that is, the party in power when Evo Morales was president. He soon re-established diplomatic relations with Maduro's regime, enabling him to send his ambassador to La Paz again, although the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Karen Longaric, declared the members of the Venezuelan embassy *persona non grata* and expelled them from the country in November 2019 (Carranza Jiménez 2020).

All Latin American countries where the leftists came to power in the meantime cancelled their support for Juan Guaidó and re-established diplomatic relations with the official regime of Nicolás Maduro in Caracas. As previously mentioned, the ideological change in Argentina took place in 2019, when power was won by leftist Peronist Alberto Fernández. In January 2020, Fernández withdrew the agreement given to Guaidó's ambassador and unequivocally announced that the official Buenos Aires recognised only Nicolás Maduro as the legitimate president of Venezuela (González 2020). Leftist Pedro Castillo won the presidential elections in Peru in 2021 and soon after recognised

Juan Guaidó, i.e., ordered the re-establishment of diplomatic relations with the official Caracas, considering that Peru has not had an ambassador in Venezuela for four years (Lozano 2021). In 2022, Colombia got a left-wing president for the first time in its history: Gustavo Petro, the former mayor of Bogotá but also a former guerrilla. In August 2022, Petro said that he did not consider Juan Guaidó as the president of Venezuela and announced that his country would re-establish diplomatic relations with Maduro's regime (Naghypour 2022). The exception to this trend of redefining the attitude towards the self-proclaimed President Guaidó was Chile. When Gabriel Boric, a nominal leftist, came to power in Chile in 2021, he did not only recognise Juan Guaidó but also declared that Venezuelan socialism, whose protagonists were Hugo Chávez and Nicolás Maduro, was a failed cause and that it had nothing to do with the authentic Latin American left (*Tal Cual* 2022). Although Boric came to power with the votes of Chilean leftists, including the still-active communists, it is difficult to characterise him as a leftist leader. Moreover, he advocates far more ideas from the left-liberal spectrum and from the ecological agenda. In Honduras, for example, after coming to power in 2022, the leftist Xiomara Castro promptly renewed diplomatic ties with Venezuela, recognising Nicolás Maduro as the president. This was anticipated given that Xiomara Castro is the wife of former Honduran President Manuel Zelaya, who had exceptional relations with Hugo Chávez (*France 24* 2022). Finally, at the end of 2022, in the second round of presidential elections in Brazil, the leftist Lula da Silva won over the ultra-right Bolsonaro. He restored diplomatic relations with neighbouring Venezuela, recognising only Nicolás Maduro as the legal and legitimate president. He also stated that it was absurd that, despite the electoral will of Venezuelans, Juan Guaidó was proclaimed president (Maia 2023).

Conclusion

Latin America entered the 21st century facing many problems and challenges. During more than two decades of this century, the main characteristic of Latin American countries was and remains cyclicity, which is a unified and important framework for understanding the crisis in Venezuela. The concept of cyclicity often includes changes in ideologies, different political doctrines, different models of economic and social development, and changeable attitudes towards the integration process and priorities on the foreign policy agenda. The example of Venezuela is a typical case of disunity on all vital issues, such as the application of the economic model (neoliberalism vs. Latin American socialism) and foreign policy (Latin American regional integration vs. attachment to US foreign and security policy). For Chavism, regional political and economic cooperation was one of the key pillars of the Bolivarian Revolution, and the

Bolivarian Alliance for America (ALBA) should be highlighted as a form of subregional cooperation strongly promoted by Hugo Chávez. It was created in 2004, with headquarters in Caracas, with the aim of helping Latin American countries with progressive regimes fight inequality, poverty, a lack of political and economic emancipation, and so on (Петровић 2023, 23).

Chavism was one of the causes of the political crisis in Venezuela and the emergence of a dual government. On the one hand, Chavism fell into an internal crisis after Nicolás Maduro replaced the deceased Hugo Chávez in 2013. On the other hand, the Venezuelan opposition became even stronger, especially after Juan Guaidó, with the help of part of the international community, proclaimed himself the president of Venezuela. What followed were almost four years of political, diplomatic, and media struggles between Maduro's regime and Juan Guaidó, during which the Venezuelan economy was further impoverished and society was even more deeply divided.

In December 2022, the Venezuelan opposition parties held internal elections for their new leader and, thus, the interim president of Venezuela, in which Dinorah Figueroa won. Juan Guaidó lost the position of interim president and soon left for Miami, that is, the United States, which ended the period of dual power in Venezuela shared between him and Nicolás Maduro. In this paper, we have shown that the events in the observed period deeply divided not only Venezuelan society but also the entire international community, especially the Latin American region. Given that the political conflict between Maduro and Guaidó had a distinct ideological character, practically all Latin American countries favoured one of the two in accordance with the ideological profile of their ruling regime. Right-wing countries have unhesitatingly supported Juan Guaidó as a conservative and neoliberal politician close to the US. Those countries with left-wing regimes have remained loyal to good relations with the socialist and Latin American integralist Nicolás Maduro. Meanwhile, from 2019 to 2022, every change of government in Latin American countries led to changes in the attitude towards Guaidó or Maduro, given that these changes had a strong ideological sign. In conclusion, we can say that the case of dual power in Venezuela showed that ideology still represents an essential basis for the creation of regional foreign policy in every Latin American country.

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ОДНОС ЛАТИНОАМЕРИЧКИХ ЗЕМАЉА ПРЕМА ДВОВЛАШЋУ У ВЕНЕЦУЕЛИ ОД 2019. ДО 2022. ГОДИНЕ

Апстракт: Предмет истраживања овог рада је однос латиноамеричких земаља према двовлашћу у Венецуели у периоду између 2019. до 2022. године, а који је обележен борбом између легално изабраног председника републике Николаса Мадуре и Хуана Гуаида, самопроглашеног председника републике подржаног од стране тзв. колективног запада, за пуну контролу над државом. Кључни разлог аутора да изабере посматрану тему као предмет истраживања јесте важан утицај који је период двовлашћа оставио не само на односе унутар латиноамеричке макро регије, већ и на шире међународне односе. Полазна хипотеза истраживања јесте да је позиција коју су латиноамеричке земље заузимале по питању признавања легалности и легитимности самопроглашеног председника Хуана Гуаида била директно одређена владајућим идеологијама у њима, где су десничарске власти признале Хуана Гуаида као председника, односно прекинуле дипломатске односе са режимом Николаса Мадуре. Резултати истраживања показали су да се однос латиноамеричких земаља према двовлашћу у Венецуели у значајној мери окренуо у корист Николаса Мадуре након тзв. другог ружичастог таласа, односно доласка левичара на власт у Аргентини, Боливији, Бразилу, Перуу и Колумбији. У истраживању су коришћени историјски приступ и студија случаја, као и компаративна анализа.

Кључне речи: Венецуела; двовлашће; Николас Мадуро; Хуан Гуаидо; Латинска Америка.