

Resolved: The United States should end its economic sanctions against Venezuela

AFF - Laurel CY

Katherine and I affirm.

Contention 1: the Food Crisis

US sanctions exacerbate the food crisis for three reasons.

First, Cutting oil revenue

According to US government data, 70% of agricultural goods in Venezuela are imports. Funding for these imports relies on revenue generated by the oil industry. However, due to US sanctions, oil revenue fell by more than 40%. This led to an 80% rate of food shortages.

Second, Hyperinflation

[Dastgerdi 18](#) finds that economic sanctions push inflation into hyperinflation. Hyperinflation in Venezuela has reached a devastating level, as inflation has reached 10 [million](#) percent. Food is no longer affordable due to hyperinflation. 1 liter of milk literally costs $\frac{1}{3}$ of an average person's annual salary.

Third, Sadistic Hoarding and Distribution of Resources

[Peksen 10](#) states that as sanctions make resources harder to find and more scarce, authoritarian regimes hoard them. They make the population more dependent on their largesse, and withhold resources from those who might threaten their rule. [Price 19](#) quantifies this, finding 83 percent of Maduro's supporters receive food benefits, as opposed to 14 percent of independents.

Our first impact is hunger:

[Reuters](#) in 2019 finds that 90% of Venezuelans can no longer afford or access food. [Buncombe](#) quantifies that more than 30,000 people have died due to lack of food.

Our second impact is stifling the opposition:

With little food to go around, and all of it being under Maduro's control, the government has no incentive to address the problems of the citizens who go hungry, and the opposition cannot gain support.

Contention 2: Sanctions do not lead to regime change

Sanctions will not oust Maduro for two reasons

First,

Sanctions have failed to cause military defections and stronger opposition within Venezuela to the Maduro regime.

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[Cage 19](#) of the Washington Post writes that Maduro has purged the military and diversified the security services. He expanded reach of the military throughout the country while simultaneously diluting the power of individual commanders. Maduro also relies on paramilitary groups to violently disperse protests and intimidate opposition politicians.

Second,

Sanctions have failed to deprive the elites of revenue because Maduro has illicit revenue streams to ensure the continued loyalty of his ruling coalition.

According to [InSight Crime](#) in 2018, Maduro has converted Venezuela into a prominent drug transshipment point, exporting an estimated 400 tons of cocaine annually. Maduro has also profited extensively off of illegal gold mining.

In fact, Pape's metastudy on sanctions finds that fewer than 5% of sanctions are effective in achieving their goals.

Contention 3: Sanctions increase authoritarianism

Sanctions have tightened Maduro's hold on power because he blames the US for problems that originated with his own corruption and mismanagement. There are two warrants:

First, [Soest](#) finds that leaders depict sanctions as an external "threat" to rally domestic support. Maduro blames the US sanctions for the country's economic hardships. [The New York Times 19](#) quantifies that 68% of Venezuelans believe that sanctions worsen their life. This is problematic as [The Washington Post 18](#) finds that the longer US sanctions remain in force, the more plausible the regime's anti-US propaganda becomes.

According to [the New York Times](#), Maduro suspended talks with opposition leaders to "protest" against US sanctions. He also justified to the public his denial of \$20 million in food and medical aid.

Because Venezuelans blame Maduro's scapegoat - US sanctions - instead of Maduro himself, [Soest](#) finds that sanctions contribute to the persistence of authoritarian rule rather than to democratization.

Second, the economic hardships caused by sanctions in the target state shift the balance of power in a society in the regime's favor. For this reason, [Drury](#) finds in 2010 that sanctions create new incentives for the political leadership to restrict liberties and democratic freedoms in the target states.

The impact is two fold.

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First is extrajudicial killings.

The [UN](#) quantifies that security forces have killed nearly 18,000 people in Venezuela because of alleged “resistance to authority”. [Peksen 09](#) explains that extensive sanctions increase extrajudicial killings by 64%.

Second is prolonging the Maduro presidency.

Increasing authoritarianism, through effective propaganda and repression, allows Maduro to hold onto power. Maduro exacerbates the current humanitarian crisis and perpetrates human rights abuses.

To mitigate these harms, affirm.