

Venezuela: It's Only a Coup if the US Government Says So

Media side with Trump cronies rather than common sense in labeling coup a 'protest'

By [Alan MacLeod](#)

Global Research, May 02, 2019

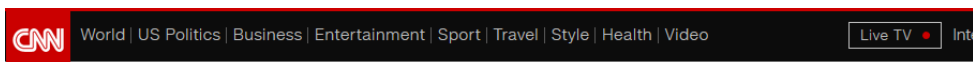
[FAIR](#) 1 May 2019

Region: [Latin America & Caribbean, USA](#)

Theme: [Intelligence, Media Disinformation](#)

*It's Groundhog Day again in Venezuela, as the local conservative opposition has launched another attempt to oust **President Nicolás Maduro** from power. Surrounded by a few hardcore supporters, Washington-backed self-appointed president **Juan Guaidó** on April 30 called on the military to rise up and overthrow the [democratically elected](#) Maduro. Guaidó, a man who has never even stood for president, [attempted the same thing](#) in January, and the opposition has attempted to remove Maduro, and his predecessor Hugo Chávez, on many occasions, including in 2017, 2014, 2013, 2002 and 2001.*

Despite bearing the clear hallmarks of a coup—[defined](#) as “the violent overthrow or alteration of an existing government by a small group”—US media have overwhelmingly supported it, as they have past attempts (FAIR.org, [1/25/19](#), [5/16/18](#), [4/18/02](#)). CNN ([4/30/19](#)) told the United States that it must “root for the people” of Venezuela, before explicitly stating, “Rooting for the Venezuelan people means hoping that Maduro will step down”—thus underlining the phenomenon noted by FAIR ([1/31/19](#)) that to corporate media, “the people” of Venezuela are whoever agrees with the US government. CNN ([4/30/19](#)) [also used images](#) of Guaidó’s paramilitaries (identifiable by their blue armbands) to illustrate a report claiming the forces of “socialist dictator” Maduro were “mowing down citizens in the streets.”



In Venezuela, root for the people

By [Frida Ghitis](#)

Updated 2253 GMT (0653 HKT) April 30, 2019



The CNN column ([4/30/19](#)) helpfully clarifies: “Rooting for the Venezuelan people means hoping that Maduro will step down peacefully.”

Not a Coup, but a...

Framing how readers see an issue is an incredibly powerful tool of persuasion. It’s not *carpet bombing*, it’s *surgical strikes*. And people are more likely to accept *advanced interrogation techniques* than they are *torture*.

In their efforts to refrain from using the negative—but accurate—term “coup” to describe events they support, the media have sometimes had to go to bizarre, roundabout and garbled lengths to dance around it. The Washington Post ([4/30/19](#)) used the clunky phrase “opposition-led military-backed challenge.” The Post ([4/30/19](#)) also published an article in support of Guaidó headlined “Is What’s Happening in Venezuela an Attempted Coup? First, Define ‘Coup,’” arguing that there were such things as “noble” and “democratic coups.”

In photos: Opposition-led, military-backed challenge underway in Venezuela



And the award for Most Awkward Euphemism goes to...the Washington Post ([4/30/19](#))!

Other outlets also refused to use the most logical word to describe events. CBS ([4/30/19](#)), Reuters ([5/1/19](#)) and CNN ([5/1/19](#)) chose the word “uprising,” NPR ([4/30/19](#)) and the New York Times ([4/30/19](#)) “protest,” and Yahoo! News went with the phrase “high-risk gamble” ([5/1/19](#)). Meanwhile, the Miami Herald ([4/30/19](#)) insisted that the “military rebellion” in Venezuela “can be called many things. But don’t call it a ‘coup attempt.’”

Even international organizations like the BBC ([5/1/19](#)), the Guardian ([5/1/19](#)) and Al-Jazeera ([5/1/19](#)) only used the word “coup” in quotations, characterizing it as an accusation attributed to government officials media have been demonizing for years (Extra!, [11-12/05](#); FAIR.org, [5/28/18](#), [4/11/19](#)). This despite the fact that Al-Jazeera ([4/30/19](#)) reported on the day of the coup that Erik Prince, CEO of the private military contractor Blackwater, tried to

persuade Donald Trump to let him send 5,000 mercenaries to Venezuela to “remove” Maduro.

Stenographers for Power

The reasons for the reluctance of the media to use the word “coup” can be found in official announcements from the government. With all the credibility of an armed man in a mask repeatedly shouting “this is not technically a bank robbery,” national security advisor **John Bolton** [told reporters](#) on April 30, “This is clearly not a coup,” but an effort by “the Venezuelan people” to “regain their freedom,” which the US “fully supports.” Likewise, **Secretary of State Mike Pompeo** [announced](#) that what we are seeing in Venezuela “is the will of the people to peacefully change the course of their country from one of despair to one of freedom and democracy.”

Soon after Bolton’s comments, Bloomberg published a series of articles ([4/30/19](#); [4/30/19](#); [4/30/19](#)), all by different writers, on why the events did not constitute a coup attempt. This, despite Bloomberg’s reporter Andrew Rosati [revealing](#) that coup leader **Leopoldo Lopez** told him and the rest the international media core that he wants the US to formally govern Venezuela once Maduro falls.

Pompeo made waves in April after [publicly admitting](#) at an event at Texas A&M University that he was a serial liar, cheat and thief. As CIA director, he [declared](#), “We lied, we cheated, we stole. We had entire training courses [on it]!” Nevertheless, the media credulously repeated his astonishing claims, made in an interview with CNN’s Wolf Blitzer ([5/1/19](#)), that Maduro, who has survived multiple coup attempts and assassinations, had been on the airport tarmac on his way to Cuba, “ready to leave” Venezuela for good, only for Russia to tell him to stay. This dubious, unverified and [officially contested](#) assertion made headlines around the world (Daily Beast, [4/30/19](#); Newsweek, [4/30/19](#); Times of London, [5/1/19](#); Deutsche Welle, [4/30/19](#)), with few questioning its credibility.



“We lied, we cheated, we stole,” Pompeo [declared](#)—but trust him, Maduro only stayed in power

because Putin told him to (CNN, [5/1/19](#))!

This is not the first time the media have lined up behind the government on a Venezuelan coup. As detailed in [my book](#), *Bad News From Venezuela: Twenty Years of Fake News and Misreporting*, the US media also endorsed the April 2002 coup against Chavez, using euphemisms such as “popular uprising” (Miami Herald, 4/18/02), “unrest” (New York Times, [5/23/02](#)) or “Chavez’s temporary downfall” (New York Times, [4/29/02](#)) to frame events more positively. Only after an official White House spokesperson used the word “coup” on April 15, 2002, was the word frequently used in the media, suggesting a close synergy between government officials and those supposedly employed to hold them to account.

After barely 12 hours, the most recent coup attempt appeared to have failed under the weight of its own unpopularity. According to the New York Times ([4/30/19](#)), Guaidó failed to attract meaningful support from the military, his co-conspirator Leopoldo Lopez had [sought refuge](#) first in the Chilean then in the Spanish embassy, and 25 of his paramilitaries had [done the same](#) in the Brazilian one. Guaidó did not win over the Venezuelan majority, who had previously [chased](#) his motorcade out of a working class district when he tried to enter. Ordinary Venezuelans continued their lives, or even [rushed to the defense](#) of the government. As USA Today ([5/1/19](#)) summed up:

Guaidó called it the moment for Venezuelans to reclaim their democracy once and for all. But as the hours dragged on, he stood alone on a highway overpass with the same small cadre of soldiers with whom he launched a bold effort to spark a military uprising.

It appears that the main base of support for the coup was the US government...and the media. The press’s extraordinary complicity, lining up with the State Department’s version of the world in the face of empirical evidence, highlights the worrying closeness between media and government. When it comes to foreign policy, there is often no difference between deep state and fourth estate.

*

Note to readers: please click the share buttons below. Forward this article to your email lists. Crosspost on your blog site, internet forums. etc

Alan MacLeod [@AlanRMacLeod](#) is a member of the Glasgow University Media Group. His latest book, *Bad News From Venezuela: 20 Years of Fake News and Misreporting*, was published by Routledge in April.

Featured image is from Club Orlov

The original source of this article is [FAIR](#)
Copyright © [Alan MacLeod](#), [FAIR](#), 2019

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: **Alan MacLeod**

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca

www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca