

Why Britain's Support for Venezuela's Self-declared President Must be Rejected

False narratives driven by Jeremy Hunt, Britain's Foreign Secretary

By [Nina Cross](#)

Global Research, February 02, 2019

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

Theme: [Law and Justice](#)

The British government's agenda towards Venezuela is blatantly interventionist, with the Foreign Office now flagrantly breaking international law in support of US geopolitics in Latin America, and it is backed by politicians from across the spectrum. Regardless of party allegiance, politicians serving the British establishment are intoxicated by the prospect of reining in a people who have said 'no' to Western imperialism.

Instrumental in coordinating Britain's role regarding Venezuela is the British Minister for the Americas, **Alan Duncan**, who has spent years working for oil companies. Duncan's role in enabling the supply of oil to jihadists during the overthrow of Libya's Muammar Gaddafi in 2011 while UK Minister for Department of International Development, is well-[documented](#). His [speech](#) in October left no doubt that he sees his role regarding Venezuela as bringing home the bacon. This involves exploiting Venezuela's resources by throwing them to the free market, but it also fulfils Britain's role in the shifting of regional power back into the hands of its US ally, and countering the influence of [China and Russia](#) who have invested heavily in Venezuela. The motives for the British establishment's complicity in overthrowing Maduro's government are numerous. For this reason, it is committed to intervention, and has been for a long time. The Foreign Office, like the EU and the US, has for years invested in Venezuelan civil societies promoting Western neoliberal ideology, and [supporting the right-wing opposition](#) in the Venezuelan parliament.

Early this week Duncan answered questions in a [parliamentary debate](#) on Venezuela. The debate was called by an opposition Labour Member of Parliament (MP) with the aim of securing Duncan's guarantee that the UK is committed to regime change:

And when will our Government recognise Juan Guaidó as the President of Venezuela? (Mike Grapes)

Alan Duncan's response was to not answer the question but give a grossly misleading account of the events:

The National Assembly, which was elected, is legitimate, but as soon as it won and had a majority against Maduro, Maduro trumped it with the fake election of a Constituent Assembly, which he deemed, against the words of the Venezuelan constitution, to be more powerful than the National Assembly.

The National Constituent Assembly, as has been [documented](#), was called in line with the

1999 Venezuelan constitution, mandated by the people in a national referendum. Duncan omits the fact the opposition [boycotted](#) the elections for the National Constituent Assembly, or that it was held in [contempt of court](#) by the Supreme Court due to ignoring orders and swearing in legislators alleged to have bought votes. The National Assembly is still held in contempt of court and has [no legitimacy](#) for swearing in an unelected interim President.

Alan Duncan is committed to the sabotage of the Venezuelan government and its constitution. These false narratives are also being driven by **Jeremy Hunt**, the British Foreign Secretary:

1/2 After banning opposition candidates, ballot box stuffing and counting irregularities in a deeply flawed election it is clear Nicolas Maduro is not the legitimate leader of Venezuela

— Jeremy Hunt (@Jeremy_Hunt) [January 26, 2019](#)

2/2 [@jguaido](#) is the right person to take Venezuela forward. If there are not fresh & fair elections announced within 8 days UK will recognise him as interim President to take forward the political process towards democracy. Time for a new start for the suffering ppl of Venezuela

— Jeremy Hunt (@Jeremy_Hunt) [January 26, 2019](#)

Even more brazenly, Duncan claims the UK position is based in law:

...some say that our concern is based on a colonial mentality. It most certainly is not; it is based on genuine concern for the plight of millions who have had their faces driven into the dirt by Maduro. The steps that may have to be taken are based on law, and we are looking at the legitimacy of their Government, not just our view of the state of the people.

As has been asked by many, if the concern for human plight is genuine, why not condemn the Gulf dictatorships? Duncan's comment about legitimacy refers to the opposition's claim that Maduro usurped his presidency by, as Hunt puts it, 'counting irregularities in a deeply flawed election.' No evidence has been provided for this. What's more the EU and the UN were invited to observe the 2018 elections but [declined](#), while [warning](#) of vote-rigging in the run up to the elections. This suggests there was an orchestrated plan to create a 'rigged' narrative. Regarding election irregularities, the Venezuelan government has shown it is serious in preventing election fraud by using a heavily audited automated [voting system](#) requiring finger ID.

The British government is operating flagrantly outside of Venezuela's constitution by colluding with parties held in contempt of court. It is also disregarding the United Nations charter through its blatant attack on Venezuelan sovereignty. It is clear that when Jeremy Hunt speaks of an '[international rules-based order](#),' a phrase for which he has much fondness, he is referring to Western supremacy and not international law.

While law is the most basic point of reference for any disagreement, how many of the 650

British MPs have taken the 10 minutes needed to research the legitimacy and legality of Jeremy Hunt's actions against the Venezuelan government? If they have not done this, why not? One answer was provided in the debate by Labour Shadow Foreign Secretary Emily Thornberry:

I also believe that it is a mistake in such situations simply to think that every problem will be automatically solved by changing the leader, let alone the kind of US-led intervention being threatened by Donald Trump and John Bolton. Instead, if we all genuinely believe in resolving the crisis in Venezuela and in restoring peace, democracy and stability, I hope that the Minister will agree that our chief priorities should be encouraging all parties to engage in dialogue, working towards a peaceful resolution and, ultimately, allowing the Venezuelan people themselves to decide the way forward through the holding of new free and fair elections.

Thornberry is showing she is on board with intervention and ultimately regime change. By saying this, she is conceding the elections were corrupt and Maduro's presidency is illegitimate. She dismisses the Venezuelan constitution, that sets out the procedures for elections, that are sovereign, and that have been mandated by the country. A colonialist position embedded in democracy rhetoric.

It is rhetoric rather than law that appears to determine the actions of the UK foreign policy. The catastrophic series of interventions carried out in the name of humanity have gained their consent through the language of deception.

Iraq, Libya and Syria

The [Chilcot Report](#) reveals how Tony Blair tied the UK to Washington's chaotic regime change agenda to overthrow Saddam Hussein in Iraq, resulting in disaster for the Iraqi people and leading to the spread of ISIS. The WMD threat was based on disinformation, propaganda and constructed narratives referred to as 'flaws in intelligence.' But Blair has been exposed as a servant of Washington

"I will be with you whatever." (Blair's letter to Bush, July 2002)

The 2016 [Parliamentary inquiry report](#) reveals that the UK government's involvement in the 2011 invasion of Libya and the overthrow of its leader Muammar Gaddafi was carried out under the fake agenda of humanitarian intervention. David Cameron, Barack Obama and Nicolas Sarkozy garnered consent from their audiences by promoting stories of a dictator killing his own people, and this was spread loyally by mainstream media. This narrative was exposed as false in the 2016 inquiry when the full blame of the needless UK intervention was laid at the feet of David Cameron.

The UK government has followed Washington's foreign policy in Syria, [imposing devastating sanctions](#) and backing more ['moderate rebels'](#) inflicting chaos and violence upon the people of Syria while attempting to overthrow yet another leader portrayed as a monster by Washington and its allies. The UK government has shown it is deeply committed to US foreign policy and this is now being played out in Venezuela. Like the US establishment, the British elite does not learn lessons but is fated to inflict the same damage upon any nation that rejects Western imperialism, out of its sense of entitlement.

The weapon of rhetoric is also aimed at any resistance inside government. When addressing

the consequences of intervention in Venezuela and the possibility of a resulting civil war, Labour MP Chris Williamson was mocked and vilified by Alan Duncan:

Chris Williamson:

The issue is that there is a real danger. Venezuela is divided. There is no doubt about that. The truth is that millions support the Maduro Government and there is huge opposition to it. Intervention from the United States could precipitate a civil war and lead to a humanitarian catastrophe. Will the Minister explain why there are the double standards? Is it that he wants to facilitate another humanitarian catastrophe, as we are seeing in Yemen with British arms? Does he want to see the same in Venezuela? Does he not support the self-determination of peoples around the world, rather than intervention from western powers?

Alan Duncan:

My right hon. Friend the Member for Mid Sussex (Sir Nicholas Soames) referred to “Poundland Lenins”. I have just seen in this House one who is not even worth a penny, let alone a pound. I recognise when I see it, as do Members on the Opposition Benches, unreconstructed ideological nonsense—he is a throwback and he brings shame; indeed, I am astonished he has even been prepared to show his face in this House today. If he wants self-determination I can offer it to him: it comes from legitimate elections in Venezuela when the Venezuelan people can determine who shall run their Government.)

Do you recognise the right of self-determination [@AlanDuncanMP?](#)

I don't know what they say in the Gentlemen's clubs of London, but my constituents are sick of Britain meddling overseas.

They want a war on poverty at home - not poor people abroad.
pic.twitter.com/ETWo2wqr13

— Chris Williamson MP #GTTO (@DerbyChrisW) [January 30, 2019](#)

The question about serious consequences is basic and essential. Duncan took part in the parliamentary inquiry on Libya because of his involvement in regime change, and he answered questions to account for the dire mess his government made of what was once a sovereign country. The inquiries on the invasions of Iraq and Libya are about consequences. But turning countries into failed states does not dampen the mood of the entitled. Duncan's disregard for the consequences of intervention in yet another country, which could include a civil war, is all the proof needed that the motives for intervention are politically-driven and not humanitarian. He then turns to Labour's establishment neoliberals for support to vilify Williamson. But it is not just Duncan using Venezuela to attack dissenters. Jeremy Hunt has shown he will weaponize Venezuela to attack Jeremy Corbyn:

Wonder how proud [@jeremycorbyn](#) is of ringing Nicolas Maduro on live TV to congratulate him on his victory? If Maduro's policies result in 82% of population in poverty there is just the tiniest clue what Corbyn's policies might do to

Britain...

— Jeremy Hunt (@Jeremy_Hunt) [January 26, 2019](#)

The British government's illegal agenda for Venezuela is clear to the world, blatantly and brazenly fronted by Jeremy Hunt and Alan Duncan. Not only do they ignore international law, but refuse to be held to account inside Parliament, exposing a reckless sense of entitlement. It is clear that the moral compass of this government '...is not worth a penny, let alone a pound.'

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