

4. Thematische Analysen und aktuelle Diskurse

4.1. ASEAN's Responses to the US Intervention in Venezuela

Kei Koga

Nanyang Technological University (NTU), Singapore

On 3 January 2026, the United States conducted a special operation in Venezuela that resulted in the rapid detention of President Nicolás Maduro and his transfer to the United States to face drug-related charges. The move generated significant controversy in the international community. Many, including Global South countries, framed the operation as a violation of core international principles — state sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the prohibition on the unilateral use of force. For ASEAN member states, which have long upheld non-interference as a foundational norm, the episode posed a particularly political test. The key question is not whether the member states value sovereignty, but whether they are willing to apply this principle consistently when the actor in question is the United States which has offered regional stability in East Asia for a long time.

To be sure, ASEAN's past responses to external interventions indicate that unity is often maintained through lowest-common-denominator diplomacy rather than through substantive convergence. The Gaza crisis after October 2023 illustrated this pattern: Brunei, Indonesia, and Malaysia — countries with diplomatic ties to Palestine — issued strong criticisms of Israel, while others adopted more cautious language emphasizing restraint and humanitarian concerns. The eventual ASEAN foreign ministers' statement avoided explicit condemnation and instead highlighted de-escalation and humanitarian assistance, thereby preserving formal unity despite clear intra-regional differences.

The emerging reactions to the Venezuela operation reveal a similar dynamic. Most Southeast Asian governments expressed concern and reiterated support for international law and the UN Charter, but only a few framed the US action as an outright violation. Singapore, for instance, expressed a grave concern about the US intervention, stating that any intervention

without authorization contravenes international law and has troubling implications for small states, while the Philippines stressed sovereignty and peaceful dispute settlement even as it acknowledged US security concerns. Malaysia adopted one of the strongest positions, describing the operation as a clear violation of the fundamental principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and international law. Brunei, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Timor Leste, and Vietnam highlighted the importance of international law, restraint, and/or concerns over the protection of civilians. Overall, however, regional responses clustered around calibrated concern rather than direct condemnation, allowing them to signal normative consistency without openly confronting the United States.

A comparison with ASEAN reactions to Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 is instructive. In that case, several member states — most notably Singapore — explicitly condemned Russia and imposed unilateral sanctions. Cambodia's then-Prime Minister Hun Sen also criticized the invasion and called for an immediate ceasefire. At the same time, most other members adopted stronger-than-usual language in defence of sovereignty and territorial integrity without engaging in direct naming-and-shaming. Brunei, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam emphasized the importance of international law, called for dialogue, and urged the withdrawal of forces while avoiding explicit attribution. Although ASEAN was unable to reach a decisive and unified position, it issued a joint statement expressing concern and calling for peaceful resolution. Notably, at the United Nations General Assembly, eight ASEAN member states voted in favour of the resolution condemning the invasion, while Vietnam and Laos abstained, indicating that the political cost of supporting the norm of sovereignty was manageable when the target was not a central security partner.

The contrast highlights differences in member states' strategic positions. ASEAN states invoked the same legal principles in both cases; however, their level of diplomatic explicitness varied according to the strategic costs associated with their alignment with particular great powers. Russia is not a primary security provider for most Southeast Asian countries, although some members, notably Vietnam and Laos, maintain long-standing defence and political ties with Moscow. By contrast, the United States has relatively close relations with the majority of ASEAN members, even if more independent-minded states such as Malaysia were willing to adopt a firmer rhetorical stance. The more cautious responses to the Venezuela operation therefore reflect hedging behaviour and the need to balance normative

commitments with alliance politics, economic interdependence, and uncertainty in the Indo-Pacific strategic environment. At the same time, the scale and intensity of the Ukraine war – being a full-scale interstate invasion – also made stronger reactions more politically and morally compelling than in the case of a limited special operation.

This does not necessarily mean that ASEAN members are neglecting the non-interference principle or that divergent strategic preferences jeopardize ASEAN unity. Rather, respect for non-interference functions as an institutional reference point to prevent external powers from excessively encroaching upon Southeast Asia, even if its application beyond the region is uneven. Divergence in national responses demonstrates ASEAN's capacity for flexible adaptation: member states retain diplomatic autonomy while the association produces collective statements framed in procedural and humanitarian terms. ASEAN unity, therefore, rests less on shared threat perceptions or common foreign policy positions than on agreement over diplomatic form and process. The Venezuela case reveals not fragmentation, but the limits of norm-based diplomacy under conditions of great-power asymmetry.

4.1.1. ASEAN Members' Official Statements on U.S. Action in Venezuela

Brunei Darussalam

Brunei Darussalam expresses concern on the developments in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and continues to closely monitor the situation.

We underscore the importance of upholding international law and principles of the United Nations Charter, including respect for the independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of all states.

Brunei Darussalam stresses the need to ensure the protection and well-being of the Venezuelan people and to respect their legitimate right to determine their future.

We call on all parties concerned to exercise restraint and to settle differences by peaceful means, including through genuine dialogue and diplomacy without resorting to threat or use of force. In this regard, Brunei Darussalam supports all efforts towards promoting de-escalation for an inclusive and peaceful resolution on the situation in Venezuela, in accordance with international law.¹

5 January 2026

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Kingdom of Cambodia

Cambodia follows the developments in Venezuela with serious concerns. Cambodia strongly advocates for peace and stability in Latin America and beyond.

Cambodia consistently upholds the importance of peaceful settlement of differences and disputes through dialogue and respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states, to contribute to peace, security, stability and cooperation in the region and the world

Cambodia wishes to underscore its respect for international laws and norms, and in compliance with principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter.²

17 January 2026

Republic of Indonesia

The Government of the Republic of Indonesia is closely monitoring the latest developments in Venezuela.

Indonesia expresses its grave concern over any action involving the use or threat of force, which risk setting a dangerous precedent in international relations and could undermine regional stability, peace, and the principles of sovereignty and diplomacy.

It is imperative that the international community respects the right and the will of the people of Venezuela to exercise their sovereignty and to determine their own path and future.

Indonesia urges all parties to exercise dialogue and self-restraint and to fully respect international law, including the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter and international humanitarian law, particularly the protection of civilians, whose safety and well-being must remain a top priority.³

5 January 2026

People's Republic of Laos

The Lao PDR expresses deep concern regarding information related to the ongoing situation in Venezuela. The Lao PDR calls upon all parties concerned to strictly adhere to international law and Charter of the United Nations, including the principle of respect for national sovereignty, and to refrain from the use or threat of force in international relations. The Lao PDR urges all

*parties concerned to exercise restraint, engage in constructive dialogue to resolve disputes and differences in accordance with international law, thereby fostering peace, security, stability, and cooperation in the region and the world at large.*⁴

4 January 2026

Malaysia

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is closely monitoring the unfolding developments in Caracas, Venezuela, following reports of security operations in the capital earlier today.

As a matter of principle, Malaysia opposes all forms of foreign intervention in the internal affairs of other States, as well as the threat or use of force. These are fundamental principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and international law. Malaysia consistently upholds the importance of peaceful resolution of disputes through dialogue, respect for sovereignty, and adherence to international norms.

At this critical time, it is crucial for the concerned parties to exercise maximum restraint, and seek peaceful solutions through dialogue and diplomacy.

*In parallel with these developments, the Ministry's priority remains the safety and well-being of Malaysian citizens abroad. The Embassy of Malaysia in Caracas has established contact with registered Malaysians in the country, and all confirmed registered citizens are currently safe and accounted for. The Embassy is actively monitoring the situation on the ground and stands ready to provide necessary consular assistance should the need arise.*⁵

4 January 2026

Neither the Ministry of Foreign Affairs under the National Security and Peace Commission nor the National Unity Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has issued a statement

Republic of the Philippines

The Philippines views with concern the evolving events in Venezuela and their consequential impact on peace and stability in the region as well as on the rules-based international order.

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While acknowledging the United States' underlying security considerations, the Philippines stresses the relevant principles of international law, including the independence and sovereign equality of states, the peaceful resolution of disputes, the prohibition against the threat or use of force, and non-interference in the domestic affairs of sovereign states.

The Philippines calls on concerned parties to respect international law, including the UN Charter, exercise restraint to prevent escalation of conflict, restore peace and order in Venezuela and promote the safety and well-being of all the people, including the Filipinos living in Venezuela and the surrounding countries.⁶

5 January 2026

Singapore

Singapore is gravely concerned by the US intervention on 3 January 2026 in Venezuela.

Singapore is deeply committed to international law and the principles of the UN Charter that safeguard the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states, especially small states. Singapore has consistently opposed actions contrary to international law by any parties, including foreign military intervention in any country.

Singapore urges all parties to exercise restraint and hopes for a peaceful resolution to the situation in Venezuela in accordance with international law and the principles of the UN Charter.

There are no Singaporeans e-registered with MFA in Venezuela. Singaporeans are advised to defer all travel to Venezuela.⁷

4 January 2026

Kingdom of Thailand

Following the recent escalation of tensions between the United States and Venezuela and events of 3 January 2026,

Thailand has been monitoring the situation in Venezuela closely and urges all parties involved to resolve the conflict peacefully with full respect for the UN Charter and international law, exercising the utmost restraint to avoid a further escalation, while prioritizing the protection of civilians and respecting the will of the Venezuelan people.

*The Royal Thai Embassy in Lima, Peru, which is accredited to Venezuela, remains in close coordination with Thai nationals in Venezuela and stands ready to provide necessary assistance. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs also advises Thai nationals to carefully assess the situation and reconsider non-essential travel to the area at this time.*⁸

4 January 2026

Timor-Leste

Timor-Leste has been monitoring reports of the United States' intervention in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and the apprehension and forcible removal of its President and his wife on 3 January 2026.

Timor-Leste expresses its concern over the disruption to civilian life and the potential humanitarian impact resulting from foreign military activities.

Timor-Leste reaffirms its commitment to international law, including respect for sovereignty, non- use of threat and force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, and the peaceful resolution of disputes, as enshrined in Article 2 of the United Nations Charter as its principles are essential to safeguarding the independence of all States, and particularly, small States.

*Timor-Leste calls for restraint, a return to dialogue and diplomacy, and a peaceful resolution of the situation in accordance with international law and the principles of the United Nations Charter.*⁹

5 January 2026

Socialist Republic of Vietnam

Vietnam is deeply concerned about information regarding the current situation in Venezuela, spokeswoman of the Vietnamese Ministry of Foreign Affairs Pham Thu Hang said on January 3.

Answering reporters' question on Vietnam's response to the situation in Venezuela, Hang said Vietnam calls on all relevant parties to respect international law and the United Nations Charter, including the principles of respecting national sovereignty and refraining from the use or threat of force in international relations.

Vietnam also calls on the parties to exercise restraint, engage in dialogue and resolve disputes and differences on the basis of international law, contributing

to peace, security, stability, and cooperation in the region and the world, she said.

Given the complex and tense situation in Venezuela, which poses potential safety risks to citizens, the ministry on January 3 advised Vietnamese nationals to carefully consider travel to the country at this time.

Vietnamese citizens currently in Venezuela should leave dangerous areas, closely monitor developments, and strictly comply with local authorities' regulations on travel as well as advisories issued by the ministry, including those by the Consular Department and the embassy in Venezuela.¹⁰

4 January 2026

Notes

- 1 Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Brunei Darussalam, "Brunei Darussalam's Statement on the Situation in Venezuela," press release, 5 January 2026, <https://www.mfa.gov.bn/Lists/Press%20Room/news.aspx?id=1208&source=https://www.mfa.gov.bn/site/home.aspx>.
- 2 Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Kingdom of Cambodia, "Statement of the Spokesperson on the Situation in Venezuela," press release, 17 January 2026, <https://mfaic.gov.kh/en/media/view/2026-01-17-press-release-statement-of-spokesperson-of-the-ministry-of-foreign-affairs-and-international-cooperation-on-the-si-23-47-38>.
- 3 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia (Kemlu RI), X post, 4 January 2026, accessed 24 February 2026, https://x.com/Kemlu_RI/status/2007830880182792425.
- 4 Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Lao PDR, "Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Lao People's Democratic Republic on the Situation in Venezuela," press release, 4 January 2026, <https://www.mofa.gov.la/gweb/gweb/backend/web/index.php?r=site/detail&id=1446>.
- 5 Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia (Wisma Putra), "Update on the Situation in Caracas, Venezuela," press release, 4 January 2026, <https://www.kln.gov.my/web/guest/-/update-on-the-situation-in-caracas-venezuela-4-january-2026?inheritRedirect=true>.
- 6 Department of Foreign Affairs, Republic of the Philippines, "DFA Statement on Situation in Venezuela," Press release, 5 January 2026, <https://www.philippine-embassy.org.sg/dfa-statement-on-situation-in-venezuela/>.
- 7 Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Singapore, "Situation in Venezuela," press statement, 4 January 2026, <https://www.mfa.gov.sg/newsroom/press-statements-transcripts-and-photos/ministry-of-foreign-affairs-press-statement--situation-in-venezuela--4-january-2026/>.
- 8 Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thailand, "Statement on tensions between the United States and Venezuela," press release, 4 January 2026, <https://www.mfa.go.th/en/content/statement-us-venezuela-2>.

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- 9 Government of Timor-Leste, "Timor-Leste's statement on the situation in Venezuela," press release, 5 January 2026, <https://timor-leste.gov.tl/?lang=en&p=46661>.
- 10 Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Vietnam, "Vietnam deeply concerned about reports on situation in Venezuela: spokesperson," 4 January 2026, <https://mofa.gov.vn/en/web/ministry-of-foreign-affairs/detail/chi-tiet/vietnam-deeply-concerned-about-reports-on-situation-in-venezuela-spokesperson-58311-178.html>.

