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Guaidó and Maduro's Twitter engagement and discourse in Venezuela (2017-
2022): a case study in the politics of the Internet

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The present dissertation seeks to examine and document the Twitter interactions that occurred in Venezuela between the two National Assemblies and their respective presidents during the period spanning 2017 to 2022. Specifically, this study will focus on the Twitter accounts of Juan Guaidó, Nicolas Maduro, and the National Assemblies under their administrations. The study aims to examine the communication strategies on Twitter of both Maduro and Guaidó and test hypotheses related to legitimacy, political competition, Venezuelan nationalism, and public protests in their discourse.

Overall, the dissertation will consist of three distinct parts. In the first part, it will provide a comprehensive historical context to better comprehend the complex political situation that led to the emergence of "two presidents" in Venezuela. The second part illustrates the research methodology and presents the tweet data organized on a yearly basis. The third part of the study will create a timeline of milestones in recent Venezuelan history based on political science magazines, journals, and state media, and will answer questions about engagement during important moments in recent history. In this last part, the dissertation will test four key hypotheses on legitimacy, political competition, Venezuelan nationalism, and public protests.

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Declaration

I declare that I have written this Bachelor thesis independently under the supervision of the head supervisor of the thesis) and stated all employed sources and literature.

In Hradec Králové, 21.04.2023

Signature

Annotation

SUÁREZ SALGADO, María Ximena Xavier, 2023. 'Guaidó and Maduro's Twitter engagement and discourse in Venezuela (2017-2022): a case study in the politics of the Internet'. Hradec Králové: Philosophical Faculty, University of Hradec Králové.

This Bachelor thesis tests various hypotheses about the communication tactics used on Twitter by both Nicolás Maduro and Juan Guaidó, as well as “their own” National Assemblies, on Twitter. These theories touch on four major topics: legitimacy, political competition, Venezuelan nationalism, and public protests. The essential premise is that Maduro's prior position of authority allowed him to dismiss Guaidó and concentrate on employing nationalist language while maintaining the stability of his own regime. Guaidó, on the other hand, had to focus on proving his own legitimacy by displaying the international community's vocal support while encouraging rallies against Maduro's administration because he lacked Maduro's intrinsic military support.

Keywords: Twitter, political discourse, National Constituent Assembly, Venezuela, Guaidó, Maduro

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Guaidó and Maduro’s Twitter engagement and discourse in Venezuela (2017-2022): a case study in the politics of the Internet

“I am going to confess that a little bird approached me, once again it approached me and told me (...) that the Commanding Officer [Chavez] was happy and full of love for the loyalty of his people (...) he must be proud.”

Nicolás Maduro, 2014.

Introduction

For exactly 725 days between 2019 and 2022 Venezuela simultaneously had two presidents, during a massive refugee crisis with over 7.1 million Venezuelans having fled the country since 2014 (Human Rights Watch 2023). Those following from afar the never-ending succession of unfortunate events of the Venezuelan political landscape might say that Juan Guaidó “declared himself the president” while Nicolas Maduro “was just trying to govern.” This oversimplification, product of biased, incomplete international media reporting, fails to account for three decades of democratic deterioration that had been unfolding in Venezuela, a country that can count on the largest crude oil reserves in the world (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries 2022). In addition, even after learning who these two presidents are and how this situation happened, one must also understand who supports them and who they support and what they are doing to tackle the country’s issues. A way to gain insight into these fundamental questions, to assess their political discourse and agenda is to directly examine the way in which they communicate.

Today, social media has become fundamental for political communication, providing politicians with a direct, instantaneous, and cheap tool for reaching their supporters and adversaries (Zeitsoff 2017). In particular, Twitter has surfaced as a popular platform for politicians to engage in public discourse, express their opinions, and shape public opinion. The use of Twitter as a platform to maintain contact with their followers and consequently their electorate – is now an expected part of politicians’ communication strategy. This global phenomenon is relevant in Venezuela, where presidents Nicolas Maduro and Juan Guaidó have used Twitter to advance their own political agendas. Maduro, who has been in power since 2013, has used Twitter for promoting his party’s activities and his own electoral

campaign; Guaidó, who emerged as the leader of the opposition in 2019, has used Twitter to mobilize his supporters and rally international support for his cause.

This study aims to examine several crucial moments in Venezuela's recent history in order to test various hypotheses about the communication strategies used on Twitter by both Maduro and Guaidó, as well the National Assembly who named Guaidó the Interim President, and the National Assembly that Maduro's government formed later on¹. These hypotheses relate to four key themes: **legitimacy (H1), political competition (H2), Venezuelan nationalism (H3), and public protests (H4)**. The underlying assumption is that Maduro's pre-existing position of power allowed him to disregard Guaidó and focus on using nationalist rhetoric to criticize foreign adversaries while promoting the stability of his own regime. On the other hand, Guaidó, who lacked Maduro's inherent military support, had to concentrate on asserting his own legitimacy while promoting protests against Maduro's government.

Considering the ongoing economic crisis, hyperinflation, and mass migration the country has experienced for the past 10 years, analyzing the two most important figures' discourse becomes crucial in understanding the political climate of the country. For this dissertation, the Twitter engagement of Nicolás Maduro and Juan Guaidó is the topic of interest. By analyzing their Twitter activity, as well as the content of their tweets, we can gain insight into their political strategies, their communication styles, and the reception of their messages by their followers. In this paper, we will explore the Twitter engagement of Maduro and Guaidó, comparing their approaches to political communication and examining the factors that have contributed to their success (or failure?) on the platform.

The first part of this dissertation contains a historical review that provides insight as to how Nicolás Maduro and Juan Guaidó found themselves both in power, as well as the general context of contemporary Venezuelan politics. For this, it is important to note that in the past 30 years there have been growing concerns regarding the deterioration of democracy in the country, as well as a major break in the political party system (Flores-Macías 2012). In this

¹ For clarity and accuracy, in this dissertation I will refer to the National Assembly who named Guaidó Interim President as simply "the National Assembly" and to Maduro's as "Maduro's National Assembly"-

section, this dissertation scrutinizes the major political events that transpired between 2017 and 2022. More specifically, it provides context as to the 2017 protests that erupted in the country.

The second part of this dissertation contains a description of the methodology, and the approach chosen to perform the analysis of the tweets. This includes a justification to the use of Twitter (instead of Facebook, Youtube, or any other social media), a description of the datasets used, its retrieval and its organization for the follow-up analysis.

The third part of this dissertation offers an overview of the two presidents' - and their respective National Assemblies' - use of Twitter as a tool to analyze political discourse and different political phenomena. This part of this dissertation will contain an overview of the accounts' activities (@jguaido and @AsambleaVE; @NicolasMaduro and @Asamblea_Ven) as well as in-depth analysis of the content of the tweets that are part of their peak weeks of activity from 2017 until 2022. Here, the four hypotheses are tested, using the body of the tweets in peaks of activity for the accounts.

The results will show that both Maduro and Guaidó were active Twitter users: they tweeted 6.58 times and 4.5 times per day on average (respectively) during this time period. While Guaidó's discourse was based on promoting a "fight for democracy", the "cessation of the usurpation", and "going out to the streets" (to protest); Maduro's was based on "protecting Venezuela from the US and the ultra-right influence", continuing with "Chávez's legacy and the Bolivarian Revolution", and "defending the Fatherland". This study aims to determine how both presidents responded to these major political events, massive protests, and ongoing crisis through the analysis of their Twitter feed.

I. Historical Context

Venezuelan history before 2000 saw a series of political and economic changes. After the ousting of dictator Pérez Jimenez, in 1958, Venezuela transitioned towards democratic government, with elections being held in the same year. In this year the Pact of *Punto Fijo* was signed between the three main Venezuelan political parties, *Acción Democrática* (AD), *COPEI* (Christian Democratic Party), and *URD* (Democratic Republican Union) (Corrales, 2001). It established a system of rotating power-sharing, and checks and balances to maintain stability and prevent the emergence of other political forces. Despite its unarguable benefits for the prosperity of democracy in the country, the *Punto Fijo* Pact grew to be regarded as a tool for perpetuating a system of political patronage and corruption, and still failing to address the underlying social and economic issues that led to the widespread poverty and inequality, exacerbated by the oil exploitation which benefited some, but not all sectors of the population.

For the most part of the following decades, Venezuela remained democratic while the rest of the continent struggled with dictatorships, such as under Pinochet in Chile, Hugo Banzer in Bolivia, Somoza in Nicaragua, Manuel Noriega in Panama, and Jorge Rafael Videla in Argentina. Additionally, the oil boom of the 1970s was used by Venezuelan governments to widely expand the welfare state, public works, and the middle class. In fact, in 1976 Venezuelan President Carlos Andrés Pérez introduced policies including healthcare reforms, housing construction and education expansion. His administration also nationalized key industries, including the oil sector (with the creation of PDVSA, *Petróleos de Venezuela Sociedad Anónima*), which was used to fund these social programs. Venezuela's welfare state was considered one of the (if not the) most comprehensive in Latin America at the time.

During the 80s, however, all of this collapsed. As oil rents went from 37.5% in 1979 to 8.3% in 1986 as a percentage of GDP (Hausmann and Rodríguez 2015). In the 80s, austerity measures followed the dip in oil prices including cuts to welfare programs which caused general discontent in the population, as well as a deep debt crisis. In 1986, *Petróleos de Venezuela* (PDVSA) acquired 50% of CITGO, a US oil corporation, and by 1990 it had become the sole owner of the company (CITGO 2019).

The decade ended with what came to be known as the *Caracazo*, a massive protest where “the social sectors that were the most affected answered (to the austerity measures) in a massive and unusual violence” and were massively repressed by the Armed Forces (Honorio Martínez 2022), which eventually sparked demonstrations throughout the country, and ended with the massive repression in the hands of the Armed Forces. (Ministerio del Poder Popular para Relaciones Exteriores 2023) It was also in the 80s that the Presidential Commission for State Reform (COPRE) was created to help establish new channels of mediation between state and society. The policies enacted in 1988 and 1989 allowed for the apparition of new parties, and new coalitions, such as of *Causa R* (Radical Cause) and new political coalitions, such as *el Chiripero* to emerge in the 1993 elections (López-Maya 1997) in opposition to the traditional parties.

Despite these reforms, which were delayed numerous times, democratic deterioration was also signaled by the occurrence of two major coup attempts to Carlos Andrés Pérez’s administration. One on February 4th, 1992, by a group of military officers led by Lieutenant-Colonel Hugo Chávez, who was later arrested and briefly imprisoned. Carlos Andrés Pérez’ impeachment came later, in 1993, for the embezzlement of 250 million bolivars (\$17 million) for the payment of his own election campaign debts and to support the electoral process in Nicaragua (Schemo 1996). He was replaced by interim President Ramón José Velásquez. Later in 1993, Rafael Caldera was elected as President. He had been president priorly, but to win the presidency again in such an explosive political context, he had to present himself as an independent candidate outside of *AD* and *COPEI*. Being one of the signatories of the Punto Fijo Pact, his election marked an end to the power-sharing pact he had helped created and yet provided a brief period of stability amidst the two coup attempts his predecessor had experienced (New York Times 2009).

It is in this political panorama that Hugo Chávez, a former military officer, and a complete outsider to Venezuela’s political scene, rose to power in 1999 by winning the presidential election of 1998, promising to address economic inequality and corruption. Chávez entrance to Venezuelan politics completed the deterioration of its party system. In fact, “Although sudden economic crises were absent in the years leading to Chávez’s election in 1998, the gradual deterioration of economic conditions contributed to the weakening of the party system.” (Flores-Macías 2012). During his time in office, Chávez implemented a variety of

socialist policies aimed at redistributing wealth and addressing long-ignored social issues in the country. During his presidency, terms such as 21st Century Socialism and the Bolivarian Revolution² were coined, to describe the series of geopolitical changes and reforms that followed. The creation of a new Venezuelan constitution was drafted and approved in 1999, which marked, the start of the “Venezuelan 5th Republic” and a new era in Venezuela politics.

Much has been said about what followed afterwards. Hugo Chávez’ administration was characterized by an increase in social welfare programs, which gained him massive popular support and creating “informal-conservative welfare state” (Daguerre 2011), which lacked institutionalization and by extension, sustainability. In fact, Daguerre better describes them as:

“a series of emergency social programmes, the Missions, in order to attend to the basic needs of low-income individuals in terms of nutrition, health and education. The Missions played an important role in the electoral mobilisation of Chavez’s key constituency during the campaign for a recall referendum initiated by the opposition in 2004.”

During the Chávez administration, there was also a 2001 failed coup d’état (or perhaps popular rebellion?) (Cannon 2004), which has been a major point of contention for the Venezuelan population for years now. Although this dissertation does not to elaborate on the details of Chávez’ administration, it was during this time in office that ALBA (*Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América* - Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America) was founded, as an alternative to the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA or ALCA) propelled by the United States (Bilotta 2018). This being one of the numerous examples of his general opposition to United States hegemony in the continent. What is more, it is important to note that Chávez’s mandate was also marked by a significant increase in authoritarianism, suppressing the freedom of press, and beginning the persecution of political opponents. Not to mention, the devaluation of the *bolívar* (currency), as well as a rapid decline of the economy following the nationalization of several key industries, including but not limited to telecommunications, electricity, steel, and private banks.

² In Spanish: *Socialismo del siglo XXI* and *Revolución Bolivariana*

When Chávez died in 2013, Nicolás Maduro assumed the presidency after a special election held in April 2013, which he won narrowly. He had previously served as Vice-President of Venezuela from 2012. Before that, he acted as Minister of Foreign Affairs from 2006 to 2013 and President of the National Assembly from 2005 to 2006 – the same one he would later try to dissolve, and that in this dissertation is referred to as “Guaidó’s National Assembly”. His election was marred by allegations of fraud and voter manipulation, and it was followed by protests erupting throughout the whole country (Diaz-Struck and Forero 2013; Watts and Lopez 2013). Since then, his government has been criticized for a lack of transparency, human rights abuses, and for the deterioration of the economy and living standards of the population. (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights 2019)

Although the (semi-)authoritarian nature of Maduro's administration cannot be denied, authors like Linz argue that some of the problematic aspects of “pure” presidential regimes (Linz 2019) are simply due its nature. In these cases, the president may have the ability to bypass checks and balances, such as the judiciary or legislature, to further their own interests, as well as the regular split power between the congress/legislative power and the president themselves. Maduro followed Chávez steps in more than one way, but it is during his administration that the national economy spiraled out of control. “During the 2017–21 period, Venezuela experienced yearly inflation that fluctuated between 439 percent and more than 65,000 percent. As a result, in 2021 poverty reached 94.5 percent and extreme poverty was 76.6%” (Kline and Wade 2022).

For years, Venezuela has been a case study of the decay of a democratic regime (Levitsky and Way 2002). In the region, the Venezuelan economic and political crisis has been a point of contempt, mostly due to the massive migration from the country. With over 7 million Venezuelans having left the country (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees n.d.), the issue of how the Venezuelan government has responded to the crisis and where the Venezuelan oil and resources money is leaves many questions unanswered.

2017 – A year of guarimbas: how it all started

Based on what has been previously described, it is now clear why Nicolas Maduro has been included in this study. However, describing the tumultuous series of events that led to Venezuela having “technically” two presidents is tricky. To do so, it is necessary to first understand the events that transpired in 2017. With the involvement of Juan Guaidó and the series of events that led to his eventual naming as Interim President will be explained.

As defined by RAE, a *guarimba* “In the jargon of the opposition, [...] is a protest organized in residential areas, with street closures, in which confrontation with authority is avoided.” (La Vanguardia 2014). The protests typically involved participants blocking roads and highways with objects such as tires, trash, and even furniture (sometimes setting them on fire). The term was coined in 2013, when similar protests happened in the country, but its use was persistent to describe those that took place in 2017 and the years that followed.

By 2017, the country had been experiencing economic and political turmoil for several years. The government’s economic policies, including price controls, currency devaluation, and nationalization of key industries were widely regarded as having contributed to the crisis. In addition, Maduro’s government was facing increasing pressure from the opposition, which was calling for early presidential elections and the release of political prisoners, many of those, resulting from the heavy-handed response to public protests by security forces. The dissolution of the **National Assembly** without a public consultation, to be replaced by a new **National Constituent Assembly**³ –inaugurated after a new series of sanctions, protests, and controversy in the country. The opposition, despite controlling the majority of seats in the National Assembly, called for protests, which happened consistently after the announcement. The coverage of these protests gained international attention due to the Armed Forces brutal repression.

In 2018, a new interim president, Juan Guaidó, was named by the opposition-led National Assembly. The same year, President Maduro called for early elections, which international observers deemed “neither free nor fair” (Herrera and Kurmanaev 2021). This created a conundrum of sorts, both for the Venezuelan population and the international community. Maduro did not step down, the National Constituent Assembly was formed, and the military

³ *Asamblea Nacional Constituyente (ANC)*

protected Maduro's administration. Simultaneously, Guaidó was recognized as the legitimate Venezuelan president by over 50 countries while several countries maintained relations with both Maduro's administration and Guaidó's or with neither (Venezuelan Politics and Human Rights 2020), the degree of recognition and power committed to each administration depending heavily on the individual nations.

Maduro's government has accused the opposition of using *guarimbas* as a form of political violence and to create chaos, while the opposition argued that they are a peaceful form of protest against the government's authoritarian policies. These protests were particularly prominent starting in April 2017. In May, Maduro's government announced a controversial election of a Constituent Assembly which would render the then-opposition controlled National Assembly powerless and effectively dissolving it. This was done without a public consultation, completely skipping the process as established by Venezuelan law. Nevertheless, by July 2017, Maduro's government held elections for the Constituent Assembly, which then voted to remove the attorney general Luisa Ortega, an outspoken critic of the government, from her position. Shortly after, in 2018, Maduro called for early elections. Needless to say, the opposition did not recognize these results.

By 2020, the National Constituent Assembly, whose main purpose was supposedly to create a new constitution, was disassembled. The National Constituent Assembly never fulfilled its intended goal. In July 2020, the *CNE* (*Centro Nacional Electoral*, National Electoral Center) called for the December elections of the "new" National Assembly (BBC News 2017; BBC News Mundo 2020), which for the sake of clarity, in this dissertation will be referred to as "Maduro's National Assembly".

Based on these events, the National Assembly elected in 2015 (mostly in hands of the Venezuela opposition) declared the incumbent President Nicolás Maduro's 2018 re-election as illegitimate and declared Juan Guaidó interim President of Venezuela. Guaidó's claim to the presidency was quickly recognized by the United States, Canada, and several countries in Latin America. In the following weeks, the rest of the international community would express their support for Guaidó and recognize him as interim president, although with varying degrees of privilege and power over the consulates and embassies. This included the Lima Group, the European Union, and the Organization of American States (OAS).

However, Maduro, who maintains the support of the military and other key institutions, has refused to step down. The results of this situation have posed a great deal of confusion, for Venezuelans inside the country, Venezuelans abroad, and for international actors. There is as an unclear delimitation of the competences of each individual when it comes to providing services to the population, as well as the management of the foreign accounts of the Venezuelan government.

Describing the European Union's reaction to this situation would merit its own paper, as it would require describing each member's state initial position and later development. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the EU initially did recognize Juan Guaidó as the rightful Venezuelan President in 2018, only to stop recognizing him as such in 2020, alleging that he had lost his position as the president of the National Assembly with the vote called by Maduro for the "new" National Assembly⁴ (which on its own the EU did not recognize) and downgraded his status to a "privileged interlocutor". The finally reaching a halt with the most recent decision of the National Assembly to officially dissolve Guaidó's interim government (Deutsche Welle 2022).

As of the moment of writing this dissertation, the Venezuelan opposition, represented in the National Assembly has decided to participate in the upcoming elections. They have announced the creation of a committee to "oversee" the Venezuelan assets abroad, and the organization of the primary elections for their own candidates. Having lost popular support, Guaidó's possibilities of establishing himself as a serious candidate are close to zero. The situation is eerily similar to that of 2006, where the Venezuelan opposition refused to participate in the parliamentary elections (as they did in the election of the National Constituent Assembly in 2017, in the elections for Maduro's National Assembly in 2020) to only later, in 2015, participate in the National Assembly elections and win the majority of the seats. Hopefully, the lessons learned in the last two decades will serve as an instrument for democratic transition in the country.

⁴ In this dissertation, "Maduro's National Assembly".

II. Methodology

The research hypothesis presented in this dissertation concerns four main aspects of the political discourse of Nicolás Maduro and Juan Guaidó. The idea was to analyze whether the hypotheses concerning their approach to legitimacy (H1), political competition (H2), Venezuelan nationalism (H3), and public protests (H4) could be observed in the texts of their Twitter timeline from 2017 until 2022.

I chose a combination of quantitative and qualitative methodologies to approach this, using Twitter as a source and the Apify Twitter History Scraper to retrieve said tweets. The number of tweets retrieved was surprisingly high. Using the Twitter API, or any other type of retrieval tool, the number of tweets that could be retrieved at a time was limited to 3300. This meant that the data retrieval, although far from “manual”, did take “manual labor” to run the scrapping tasks for timeframes that would not surpass the limitation of 3300 tweets. Afterwards, the tweets – as well as the data structure, which had to be manually adjusted due to changes on the side of the Apify tool – were organized in Excel sheets to prepare the pivot tables and better understand the data and directly locate the peaks of activity and the most notable tweets. Since the analysis was done on a yearly basis, the datapoints were determined by the sum and average of the analytics metrics by week. Eventually, the calculated data was used to generate a graph where the peaks of activity and engagement were more easily located.

Due to the sheer number of tweets in the data sets (10433 for Guaidó, 11652 for Maduro), it is impossible for a sole bachelor thesis to cover all the aspects that are interesting about these datasets. For this reason, for each account, an overview has been provided in terms of the average amount of tweets by day in the overall period. This dissertation concentrates on the analysis of the tweets produced between January 1st 2017 to December 31st December 2022 by the accounts of Juan Guaido (@jguaido) and “his” National Assembly (@AsambleaVE); and Nicolas Maduro (@NicolasMaduro) and “his” National Assembly (@Asamblea_Ven, created only in 2020).

For this analysis, four metrics were used:

1. The **conversation_id**, the ID used to identify each tweet and its subsequent replies.

2. The **favorite_count**, the total amount of favorites for a particular tweet at retrieval.
3. The **retweet_count**, the total of retweets and quotes for a particular tweet at retrieval.
4. The **reply_count**, the total number of replies to a particular tweet received at retrieval.

I must note that the Apify Twitter History Scraper cannot retrieve deleted tweets. Unless a snapshot of the user timeline had been done using the WayBackMachine while the deleted tweet still existed, it would be impossible to retrieve them. This is regrettable, considering the likeliness that a deleted tweet usually tracked major negative attention, but in no way a major hindrance in the research.

This dissertation is unique in a variety of ways, due to the unique nature of the political panorama in Venezuela. Nevertheless, it is far from the first analysis of political discourse through Twitter data. See, for example, “Analysis of Political Sentiment Orientations on Twitter” (Ansari et al. 2020), which studied the sentiments towards the major political participation in the electoral process in India in 2019; or “Understanding Political Twitter” (Grubbs and Mandy 2020), which analyzed the Twitter accounts of several world leaders; before that, an article by Vox analyzing 7 months of Donald Trump’s twitter activity between 2015 and 2016 (Crockett 2016) also gained ample attention.

Purposefully, the sentiment analysis of these tweets was excluded. Although it would make for an interesting comparison between the two accounts, I prioritized analyzing the content and topics treated in the texts of the peak moments of activity as it would provide a more holistic understanding of the politicians’ use of the platform. Even more so, given that the hypothesis for this dissertation based on the pillars of legitimacy (H1), political competition (H2), Venezuelan nationalism (H3), and public protests (H4).

So why Twitter?

With the control of all the press and of the state television, Maduro’s government directly generates most of the information that is widely available for the general consumption of the Venezuelan population. Additionally, free press has been forced out of circulation by the state control on paper used to print, systematic imprisonment of journalists, activists, and

opposition leaders. As early as 2008, there were concerns about the existence of political discrimination policies such as the infamous *Tascón list*, the political takeover of the Supreme Court in 2004, and the arbitrary suspension of TV and Radio channels (Holland and Human Rights Watch 2008). This state repression eventually led to the semi-disappearance of the non-state-owned newspapers. This became the main reason why Venezuelans have taken on alternative options to be informed about day-to-day events, outside of the state-controlled media.

This, of course, includes platforms such as Twitter and Facebook. Despite Facebook being the most used social media platform used by Venezuelans, Twitter has been a staple in the mass organization of civil protests by the opposition as well as a reliable source of information about issues ranging from safety during the protests to the black-market exchange rate. Take for example, the reporting of websites such as DolarToday, which would post daily updates on Twitter of the “parallel”/black market dollar, as well as the latest “official” exchange rate(s) provided by the government (Monedas de Venezuela 2017; teleSUR 2016). Another example of the use of Twitter being that of journalists reporting on a minute by minute basis protests, lootings, or any other sort of issue that would disrupt the cities free transit, such as Leonardo León reporting (El Estímulo 2015; Runrunes 2016), or that of the Tránsito Mérida (@transitomerida)⁵ that would retweet real-life information of inhabitants of the city to inform about possible incidents on the street.

It has also become a central platform for breaking news in major news outlets, everywhere in the world. After all, Twitter is a social media platform known for the brevity of the messages shared by its users, called “tweets”. Over the course of its successful trajectory, it has indubitably had a significant impact on how people communicate, access innovation, and participate in public discourse. Twitter is a perfect example of that described by Farrell in his work, *The Consequences of the Internet for Politics*: “If personal interactions on the Internet can be systematically captured in a way that off-line transactions cannot, then we can for the first time begin to observe or make reasonable inferences about, e.g., informal communication flows, the dissemination of ideas across different social groups, and the actual network structures underlying communication.” (Farrell 2012)

⁵ <https://twitter.com/transitomerida>

After all, despite it being initially designed to allow users to share short updates about their daily lives, in the aftermath of the Arab Spring in 2011, the platform showed its potential a key tool for citizens in countries such as Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya to coordinate and organize protests. In 2013, the platform went public and has since then become a staple of the technology industry, used by many celebrities and public figures, as well as government institutions, NGOs, and individuals alike. Twitter's own premise and structure contributes to its popularity for activism and mobilizations, more specifically for protest movements and mass mobilizations (Wang and Caskey 2016) (Priest 2020).

Two main pillars being the brevity of the messages, which requires activists to produce a concise message, which in turn allows for the easy reproduction and contributes to the potential virality; and the "follow" feature, which does not require any type of reciprocity (Buente 2017). That is, unless indicated beforehand (as in, Twitter accounts can still be made private, and quite recently, accounts can be added to "Twitter close circles"), posted tweets are publicly available. Anyone can answer any publicly available tweet, regardless of their "connection" in the platform (unless there's a specific "block" done from one user to the other, in which case it is handled on an account-by-account basis; or someone has actively made their account "private"). At any given moment, any user can "@" / "tag"/mention any other. It is not necessary for them to follow or add each other as "friends"/followers.

This contrasts with the more "private" approach of Facebook, in which the default setting is for a profile to have only certain information visible to "friends": a user must send a "friend request" and the recipient of such request can decide to accept it or decline. On Twitter once a user clicks on "follow", it does not require further input from the user. In fact, this is such a distinct feature that some users might not realize the level of "public availability" their Twitter profiles has as a default setting: "A majority of Twitter users – even those who say they have private profiles or are not sure of their privacy settings – have a public profile that is visible to anyone" (Mitchell 2021)

Another distinctive feature that contributes to Twitter's unique role in the dissemination of information in the public sphere is the use of "trending topics". This allows the users to search for topics (hashtags, marked by the pound key, #) which are the most actively used

at a given time. The existence of “**trending topics**” made it easy to know what the majority (or at least a relevant amount) of users were discussing at the time in a particular country, or even globally; “the fact that a small set of topics become part of the trending set means that they will capture the attention of a large audience for a short time, thus contributing in some measure to the public agenda” (Asur et al. 2011).

Finally, the timeline, organized in chronological order, with the most recent tweets appearing first to the users, allows for a more “in the moment” approach. Meaning, that the reporting of a particular issue in real-life could also be done in such a manner that reached people *as soon as it was happening*, as well as different perspective of the same event (including footage, and pictures) by different users.

Nevertheless, Twitter has come a long way since its creation in 2006 by Jack Dorsey, Noah Glass, Biz Stone, and Evan Williams. The platform has had some major changes in the past few years: the extension of the number of characters that can be used in a tweet (in 2017, it went from 140 Unicode glyphs to 280); the addition of a “for you” tab, containing tweets of people you *might* be interested in following – as opposed to the classic chronologically organized view of the tweets by people you follow. Until 2015, any comment added to a retweeted tweet would count for the 140-character limit, as they would both be part of the same “tweet”. Then, this feature was changed and the function to “quote a tweet” allowing for an extra 140 characters for the user retweeting the original message (Edwards 2015). Over time, some other features have changed, and then reverted, some others have stuck, even more so in the past year since the acquisition of Twitter by Elon Musk. Notably, the instability of the so called “Twitter Blue” subscription program as to obtain the blue verification mark which in the past was used to symbol an account was the “official one” for certain remarkable personalities, companies, and institutions, and the changes in the timeline appearance and content making the “algorithmically generated “For You” tab the default for users” (Morris 2023).

For this dissertation, it is important to think of Twitter as a “public sphere” for public discourse (Smith 2019). This, however, does not come without its shortcomings: The anonymity that Twitter allows might account for the “online disinhibition effect” (Suler 2004), which partially accounts for the strong worded messages that one can find when

looking through the replies that certain tweets generate. Even so, politicians now have a way of swaying the public opinion regarding hot topics in the country or advancing their own political agenda: It can be a way to reach out to their supporters/to the electorate to know which topics are of concern. That is, by analyzing tweets and hashtags, we can gain insight into public opinion on a particular issue or candidate: it can provide information to politicians, political organizations, and other stakeholders. High levels of Twitter engagement can indicate that a politician or political organization is effectively using the platform to communicate and connect with their audience.

As previously discussed, hashtags, mentions and retweets can be used to coordinate events, rallies and other activities, and to build support for a particular cause or candidate. High engagement around a particular hashtag or account can indicate that a movement or campaign is gaining traction online, and thus be used to measure popularity and success of a certain approach. Granted, this should not be the sole aspect to consider when measuring a campaign's success, but it does provide insight into the public's reception and perception of it. After all, the ideas of "eDiplomacy" (US Bureau of Public Affairs Department Of State - Office of Electronic Information 2007)/"Twiplomacy" are not new ones, and neither are the concern that the topics of which a politician tweets reflect the priorities in their agenda (Cooper 2012).

When it comes to the use of Twitter to reach out to a wider audience, Venezuelan politicians are no strangers to it. There was a time in history when Venezuelan president, Hugo Chávez, himself, was the second most followed account on Twitter, only surpassed by Barack Obama. At the time, only three months after opening his Twitter account (@chavezcandanga) Chávez reported getting "nearly 288000 help request through Twitter" and assembling a team to respond to the requests. His use of "(..) Twitter and a personal website combines new techniques with classic Latin American political leadership that thrives on personal connections, said Susan Kaufman Purcell, director of the Center for Hemispheric Policy at the University of Miami." (Brice 2010). In this sense, Chávez also used the platform to offer services to his constituency – even if said services were not fully institutionalized, much like his own emergency social programmes called Missions. Similarly, the Venezuelan government (under Chávez and Maduro's administration) have been linked to the use of bots and fake accounts to promote particular tweets and accounts

(Stanford 2021) (Twitter 2021), effectively using Twitter to spread their own propaganda and to bolster government accounts. These accounts, operated using an unauthorized Twitter app called Twitter Patria (Fatherland Twitter), were well-known to have been operated by the so-called “tuiteros de la patria” (Fatherland Twitter users) under a reward-system program led by the Ministry of Popular Power for Communication and Information (Cambio16 2021). Additionally, the Chavista administration is well-known to have arrested journalists and activists under variations of accusations of “public incitement, violent insult and insult to a public official” (Díaz 2018; Ipys Venezuela 2013).

In the opposition side, a notable example of the use of social media-as to keep in touch with his supporters is that of Juan Requesens, former student leader of the *UCV (Universidad Central de Venezuela)* and a major personality in the 2013-2014 protests. He made himself known among the Venezuelan population due to his active use of the platform, also creating political debates with his political opponents in the university arena. The reporting of his detention by the Bolivarian Intelligence Service (*SEBIN*) would be later accompanied by his own tweets and his own team’s tweet about it and at the time Trending Topic hashtag #YoMeNiegoARendirme (I Refuse to Give Up) (Algarra 2020). During his imprisonment, his communications team kept his account “alive” and continued to tweet about his unjust jailing.

The use of Twitter in Venezuela and the consequences of it in real life do not escape the use of internet as political surveillance and censorship, with governments using technical means to monitor citizens' online activity and block access to certain websites or information (Navarria 2019)As it has been reported in several occasions, but most notably – for the purposes of this thesis – the Maduro and Chávez administrations have constantly blocked access to websites such as Youtube, Wikipedia, and to the internet all together in key moments of political turmoil. More specifically, in the peak of the protests in 2019, after Guaidó’s nomination as the interim president of the country. For details on the report please refer to the “Social media outage and disruptions in Venezuela amid incident in Caracas (NetBlocks 2019). Twitter data has also been used to calculate the Venezuelan emigration (Hausmann, Hinz, and Yildirim 2018), and to study the evolution of the protests after the election of the Venezuelan Constitutional Assembly in 2017 (Morselli, Passini, and

McGarty 2021) and the polarization of the discussion during the Venezuelan political crisis (Horawalavithana, Ng, and Iamnitchi 2021).

III. Analysis of the accounts

The purpose of this analysis is to deconstruct the political process. “There is, however, considerable evidence that punctuated patterns may describe broader political and social processes”. (Baumgartner and Jones 1993) The main themes treated being the 2019 protests, the dissolution of the National Assembly, the naming of Guaidó as interim president, and the subsequent elections convened by Maduro.

A few considerations address the purpose of the tweet analysis: (1) the main graphs generated have been created using the Twitter timeline for both politicians, which includes the retweets they have made to accounts that are not their own; (2) the graphs generated were created using the total amount of tweets, favorites, retweets and replies rather than an average for them: this allowed to work with raw numbers rather than the ratio of positive or negative attention these tweets might have gotten (later in this work, the averages for favorites, retweets, and replies in relation to the number of tweets provide a comparative figure); (3) this analysis concentrated on the peaks of activity and the abnormal dips/increases in replies/retweets/favorites, with the purpose of focusing into both politicians’ main topics rather than working with just numbers.

Interestingly Guaidó and Maduro had such a radically different political discourse that there was little overlapping in the addressing of the country’s issues. They disagreed about which problems mattered most: for Guaidó, the most pressing matter was regime change and the international support to his cause; for Maduro, it was the lifting of sanctions and legitimization of his own administration, while supporting his narrative with a Chavista-tinted nationalism. Additionally, the graphs showed a more relevant aspect to both accounts: for Guaidó, his profiling as a mostly unknown actor in politics is reflected in the major jump in attention after being named Interim President in 2019. However, the ratio between the amounts of tweets that he was posting, and the number of replies and favorites, shows him

as a less controversial and mostly positive opposition figure. This, as opposed to other notable, but more polarizing politicians who were more obvious candidates to lead the interim government.

This dissertation will serve as an amuse-bouche of sorts, signaling the aspects that should be analyzed further and the gaps that this investigation alone could not fill. A deeper reflection on the communication strategies used by the Guaidó-led opposition might prove itself useful in the future; in the case of Maduro, a better understanding of the Venezuelan government use of the platform might contribute to understanding the mechanisms and narratives that prevent a regime change.

1. Juan Guaidó (@jguaido)

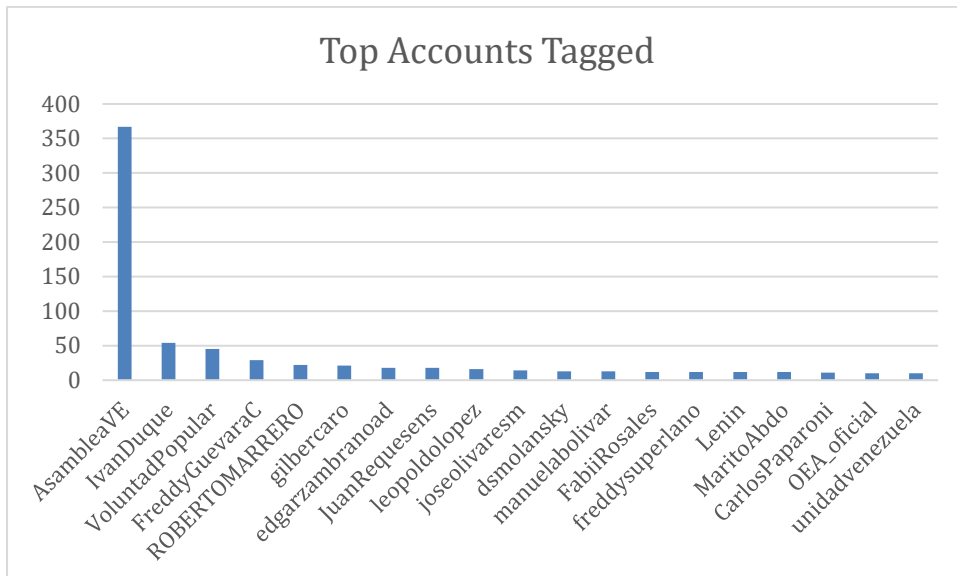
Overview

Year	Number of Tweets	Tweets per day that year	Average Favorites	Average Retweets	Average Replies
2017	2851	7,810958904	43,35952297	122,1367941	4,79656261
2018	1323	3,624657534	41,03250189	70,7467876	7,35978836
2019	2347	6,430136986	8615,18236	4779,917341	567,1819344
2020	1336	3,660273973	2635,027695	1405,199102	426,505988
2021	1150	3,150684932	1080,481739	574,3078261	187,1704348
2022	859	2,353424658	611,3341094	345,69383	191,2968568

Tweets per day between 2017-2022: 4,502966682

Total amount of Tweets between 2017-2022: 9866

Top Accounts Tagged



General comments

Please refer to Graph A1 and Graph A2 in the Appendices section for a full picture of Guaidó's Twitter timeline activity.

Guaidó's tweeting activity seems to follow the opposite pattern to that of Maduro. He started out with his most active Twitter year, at 7.81 tweets per day on average, and after peaking in tweeting activity in 2019, his Twitter productivity dramatically decreased in the following years.

The account that has been tagged the most in Guaidó's case is the account of the National Assembly, @AsambleaVE. It's been tagged almost 7 times as often as the second most tagged account, @IvanDuque, that belonging to his party. Guaidó did not nearly as effectively and as prolifically tag other accounts as did his counterpart, Maduro. This will become evident later on, in Maduro's analysis. However, Guaidó does include opposition leaders Freddy Guevara, Juan Requesenses, Leopoldo Lopez, Roberto Marrero and David Smolansky. He also actively tags well as foreign leaders, such as Ivan Duque (this being the second most tagged account) and Zelensky in several of his tweets. Guaidó tagged CITGO's official account (@CITGOve) during this time period, this will also become relevant in one of the peaks of activities studied. Funnily enough, the account named "@lenin" is not a reference to the Russian politician, but to Lenin Moreno, expresident of Ecuador for the 2017-2021 period.

Guaidó was named interim president on January 5th, 2019, and his interim government was dissolved on December 30th, 2022. As mentioned before, Juan Guaidó was a relatively unknown figure in the Venezuelan political landscape before the National Assembly named him interim president. Guaidó filled a leadership vacuum in a moment when Maduro's government had already targeted the most notable opposition leaders. At the time, Voluntad Popular's Leopoldo López was in house arrest, jailed since 2014, and his party's co-founder Carlos Vecchio had left the country fleeing the same accusations. Freddy Guevara, leader of the Democratic Unity Roundtable, was seeking asylum in Chile (Camino González and Romero-Castillo 2019).

Peak 1 – 2022, Week 32 – 8th August 2022 to 14th August 2022

This activity peak contains several interesting points that will be a constant throughout the material. The main topic of this week is connected to international events. Although a more accurate depiction of the week would place this week as a more average week, it is still important to note that even these retweets can provide some insight into Guaidó's agenda.

The biggest spike comes from the retweet made to the British Royal Family's announcement of the passing of Queen Elizabeth II, also mentioned in two more of Guaidó's tweets in Spanish. Its relevance stems from how, unlike the European Union, the UK never broke its recognition of Guaidó. In the same week, he retweeted a tweet by Carlos Vecchio, his administration's Ambassador to the United States, containing the steps to follow to obtain the TPS (Temporary Protected Status) in the US. In fact, according to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services website: *“On July 11, 2022, Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro N. Mayorkas announced the extension of Venezuela's designation for Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for 18 months. This extension will be in effect from Sept. 10, 2022, through March 10, 2024.”* Venezuela is one of the fifteen countries currently listed for TPS. Considering that there is no “conventional” route to provide services to the Venezuelan population and what Guaidó's government can do for the Venezuelan population inside the country, a major priority is addressing the needs of Venezuelans immigrant and refugees abroad, especially for what concerns improving their recognition.

Many of Guaidó's government representatives had not been officially recognized as “ambassadors” but obtained a certain degree of negotiating power. Take as an example Special Envoy Tamara Sujú in the Czech Republic, who served for less than a year for Guaidó's administration but obtained a mild form of automatic recognition for Venezuelans abroad. Similarly, Antonio Ecarri in Spain, who was recognized officially as the Venezuelan Ambassador while serving for Guaidó's government. In other instances, Guaidó's diplomatic representatives have referred to themselves as “Ambassadors” despite the foreign government not recognizing them as such, as was the case for Otto Gebauer in Germany (Kislinger 2019). This retweet getting wide attention relates to how since the end of 2022

the interim government was dissolved by “Guaidó’s” National Assembly⁶. Guaidó’s Ambassadors ceased their functions, with Carlos Vecchio being the first one to announce his stepping down on Twitter. All diplomatic functions covered by the body of Ambassadors, including humanitarian aid, representation of Venezuelan refugees and immigrants are still to be confirmed by the National Assembly.

Additionally, two other topics in the same week concerned foreign countries. First, two tweets regarded Brazil: one in Spanish and one in Portuguese, congratulating “Bolsonaro and his government” on 200 years of Brazilian independence. While an important milestone, it’s particularly interesting the tagging to Bolsonaro’s personal Twitter account rather than a Brazilian government institution or adopting a “tagless” approach. This could speak to a *personalist* approach to Latin American politics, or perhaps simply an interest in keeping good *personal* relations with the Brazilian president?

Additionally, there is yet one more retweet to the CNN Chile account concerning the 2022 plebiscite. This plebiscite’s aim was to consult Chileans about major changes to their constitution, considered the “institutional output that the political class offered was the proposal to channel the unrest following the popular uprisings of 2019”.⁴ This was a controversial issue in Chilean politics, since an undeniable popular rejection of the constitutional changes by the Chilean population, the Chilean left has called this “the result of fake news generated by the extreme right” in the country. On the specific issue at hand, Guaidó tweeted during this same week, drawing a comparison to Venezuela to make a point on the authoritarian and antidemocratic nature of Nicolás Maduro’s administration⁷. His message seems to echo that of Nueva Sociedad: *“The Latin American left read – and still reads – Venezuela from the imaginaries of the “encirclement” built in relation to Cuba since the 1960s. In this way, the Venezuelan “oil socialism” – as Chávez himself called it in 2007 – is regularly blamed for the setback he is leading Venezuelan society to. Predominant in these visions is anti-liberalism strongly rooted in the regional left and which tends to minimize democratic problems, within the framework of what in France is called*

⁶ In cases where it is needed, in the following pages, I will continue to refer to the National Assembly as “Guaidó’s” National Assembly.

⁷ Original: “Maduro and Ortega are the ones who revive dictatorships in Latam. Chileans expressed themselves democratically. The defense of human rights and democracy have no ideological cut, there is no good dictator on the left or bad on the right; all are bad. Let's defend democracy.”

“campisme”: the overdetermination of geopolitical variables in the analysis of any national reality.”^{8 9}(Stefanoni 2020)

Peak 2 – 2019, Week 04 – 21st January 2019 to 27th January 2019

This week was remarkably active, with ninety-eight tweets, averaging to 14 tweets per day, and contains lots of information to unpack in terms of the timeline:

- Average amount of favorites 49124.5 for each tweet.
- Average amount of replies is 524.5 for each tweet.
- Average amount of replies is 8532.5 for each tweet.

This week was by far the most politically important for Guaidó, as he was declared interim president of Venezuela on January 23, 2019 by the National Assembly. Despite being a member for Vargas in the National Assembly of Venezuela, he was a relatively unknown character at national level. In the graph, there is also a noticeable surge in favorites, RTs, and replies starting in the beginning of 2019. The most prevalent topics on his timeline during this period were the protests that erupted in Caracas and the whole country. This week sees major emphasis on international support for the interim government, with Guaidó listing the following countries’ representatives: Spain, Denmark, United States, France. He also emphasizes the support of the OAS,¹⁰ and calls for attention to the expulsion of several of Maduro’s Ambassadors.

Two other relevant topics during this week are (1) The protection of national assets and (2) the promotion of democracy and human rights. Given how his power and legitimacy stems from it, the Asamblea Nacional is part of the hashtags used

⁸ Original: “Las izquierdas latinoamericanas leyeron –y aún leen– Venezuela a partir de los imaginarios del «cerco» construidos en relación con Cuba desde los años 60. De esta forma, el «socialismo petrolero» venezolano – tal como lo denominó el propio Chávez en 2007– es exculpado de manera regular por el retroceso al que está llevando a la sociedad venezolana. Predomina en estas visiones el antiliberalismo fuertemente afincado en las izquierdas regionales y que tiende a minimizar los problemas democráticos, en el marco de lo que en Francia denominan «campismo»: la sobredeterminación de las variables geopolíticas en el análisis de cualquier realidad nacional.”

¹⁰ Original: “#Attention We started with concrete results for all Venezuelans. Following our requests, today from the @OEA_oficial, the US Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo @SecPompeo announces that \$20 million in humanitarian aid will be delivered. The entire world supports us!”

(#VenezuelaWithTheNationalAssemblyForFreedom¹¹). Indeed, the use of hashtags during this period is abundant and targeted to specific protests' dates. Moreover, there are several mentions of the "Amnesty Law" (*Ley de Amnistía*, hashtag #VzlaEnAsamblea), which was meant to create institutional protection for political dissidents that held positions of power in the Maduro's administration. His whole political discourse was based upon the end of usurpation, the transition government, and free elections. Finally, note that during this peak, Guaidó does not mention Maduro by name even once. Instead, he calls him "usurpador" in Spanish (usurper), which will be a constant in his discourse.

Peak 3 – 2020, Week 40 – 28th September 2020 to 4th October 2020

Most of the popularity for this week comes from retweets to much bigger accounts: The two first tweets are about Trump getting COVID. The most engaged one is a retweet from the First Lady account, by then on the name of Melania Trump and one of Guaidó's own authorship, expressing his sympathies and wishing them a speedy recovery.

In this week, 6/34 tweets are retweets. Amounting to only twenty-eight tweets by Guaidó. If these retweets are taken from the counting, it looks as follows:

With the retweets:

	Favorites	Replies	Retweets
<i>SUM</i>	1648120	479538	375359
<i>AVERAGE</i>	49943,0303	14531,45455	11374,51515

Without the retweets:

	Favorites	Replies	Retweets
<i>SUM</i>	57982	10507	32996
<i>AVERAGE</i>	2147,481481	389,1481481	1222,074074

¹¹ Original: #VzlaConLaANPorLaLibertad

Despite the presence of retweets in this week making it so relevant in Guaidó's timeline, the average amount of favorites obtained in this week is still double than the average of a "regular" week. During this week, Guaidó continues to emphasize the lack of international recognition of Maduro's government, and he still reminisces about the protests of the previous years – although this time without explicitly asking for people to "go to the streets" and protest, due to the COVID-19 restrictions. Concerning the pandemic, Guaidó still retweeted the message of Dr. Julio Castro, who calls for the attention to the "Russian vaccines that (were set to arrive) to Venezuela" despite being 4000 in total, 2000 are placebos¹². In Guaidó's timeline, nevertheless, COVID-19 was not the main topic of interest. Further analysis of the whole body of the datasets would be necessary to analyze his own narrative and position towards the pandemic and the restrictions set in place by Maduro's government.

Peak 4 – 2019, Week 10 – 4th March 2019 to 10th March 2019

All tweets of this week are solely by Guaidó. Once again, engagement levels were very high, largely focused upon the call for specific protests. There is a notable use of hashtags: only 30 tweets out of 79 tweets use at least one hashtag, which could potentially explain the higher engagement levels. Twice, he calls for the Armed Forces to take his side, first appealing to their humanity and then implying the possibility of amnesty thanks to international support. What is the most interesting during this peak is precisely the hashtags used to promote participation in the protests and to call for attention to it. More specifically, he uses a variety of hashtags¹³, but the most prevalent ones are "4MVzlaALaCalle" –

¹² Original: "#covid19 russian vaccine - explanatory thread of Russian covid19 vaccine. I have always been a pro-vaccine man, not out of faith, out of scientific conviction. What arrives in Venezuela are 4,000 vaccines, of which only 2,000 will receive the vaccine, the other 2,000 will be vaccinated with placebo."

¹³ List of hashtags used:

- VamosJuntosALaCalle
- 4MVzlaALaCalle
- SinLuz
- VamosBien
- 4Mar
- 5Mar
- 9Mar
- Venezuela
- PlanPaís
- 4MVzlaALaCalle
- Alemania
- VamosTodos
- FANB

shortened form of “4th of March, Venezuela take to the streets” and “VamosJuntosALaCalle” (Let’s go to the street together), in reference to a march that was organized for the same date.

Although it is important to have used a hashtag noticeable by the general population without necessarily affiliating it to the opposition, interestingly there was no naming convention for the hashtags used except for the date and the generic appeal to “going to the streets”. Additionally, during this week, there was no tagging to any particularly influential Twitter account that could have helped with the notoriety of the tweets themselves. That is: besides of once tagging opposition parties, Primero Justicia and Un Nuevo Tiempo, and the National Assembly, Guaidó did not attempt to make an echo of these tweets by linking and using the platform other influential politicians, relevant personalities (celebrities, influencers), nor mass media – except for a few mentions to international news agencies.

In the same week, he also announces he has received support from the EU (notably, Germany), and his gratitude to Ecuadorian President Lenín Moreno and calls for the release of the American journalist Cody Weddle. Finally, this week, there are multiple mentions to the AsambleaVE account.

Peak in Replies: 2022, Week 37 – 12th September 2022 to 18th September 2022

So far, we have analyzed the content of Guaidó’s activity peaks in Twitter. However, there is another valuable peak in replies obtained by Guaidó during this period, chosen for deeper analysis. Often, a surge in replies depends upon a tweet receiving negative attention – even more so for those tweets that have less favorites than replies – something which took place at the end of 2022. Of these tweets, two are about CITGO; one is a retweet by Carlos Vecchio, Guaidó's administration ambassador to the US. The most interacted tweet is: “*CITGO reports the best results in its history, despite the lawsuits and litigation*”

generated by the indiscriminate borrowing of the Maduro dictatorship. This is a sample of what we can do, but we still need to defend it and recover democracy. ¹⁴

The second most interacted tweet is *“In 2019 we exercised the Constitution and innovated in the fight against dictatorships, protecting assets we avoid further looting. But we also must carry our shoulders and assume the representation in the world of a country bankrupt by the regime.”* ¹⁵ which once again, refers to Venezuelan financial resources overseas. In the same week, there’s a similarly (un)popular tweet concerning the Venezuelan gold reserves in London. The replies to these tweets are generally negative: calling Guaidó a thief, claiming he has taken all the oil and gold resources and not solved any of the country’s financial issues. What is more, in CITGO’s own website, the company’s official strategy is of “withholding” the profits until “the democratic conditions in Venezuela are reestablished”, meaning that CITGO holds debt on behalf of Venezuela. In the replies, the general understanding of the Venezuelans answering Guaidó’s tweets seem to be related to the accusation that Guaidó’s interim government has been stealing the gold and oil reserves.

Furthermore, the overall understanding and transparency regarding this issue seems to come from the side of Guaidó’s administration. Despite CITGO being clearly unable to use Venezuelan crude oil imports to refine, the company continues to operate in the United States (Reuters 2019). Guaidó’s tweet, alleging that under “his administration” CITGO’s numbers are better than ever seems at the very best misleading and at its worst, disconnected from the general perception of the finances management. In fact, Guaidó did name a new ad-hoc board of directors for CITGO (Anon 2019) (Gordon 2019): this was possible due to the United States’ recognition of Guaidó’s administration as legitimate. Nevertheless, besides naming a new board of directors and the finances of the company his involvements are not public knowledge.

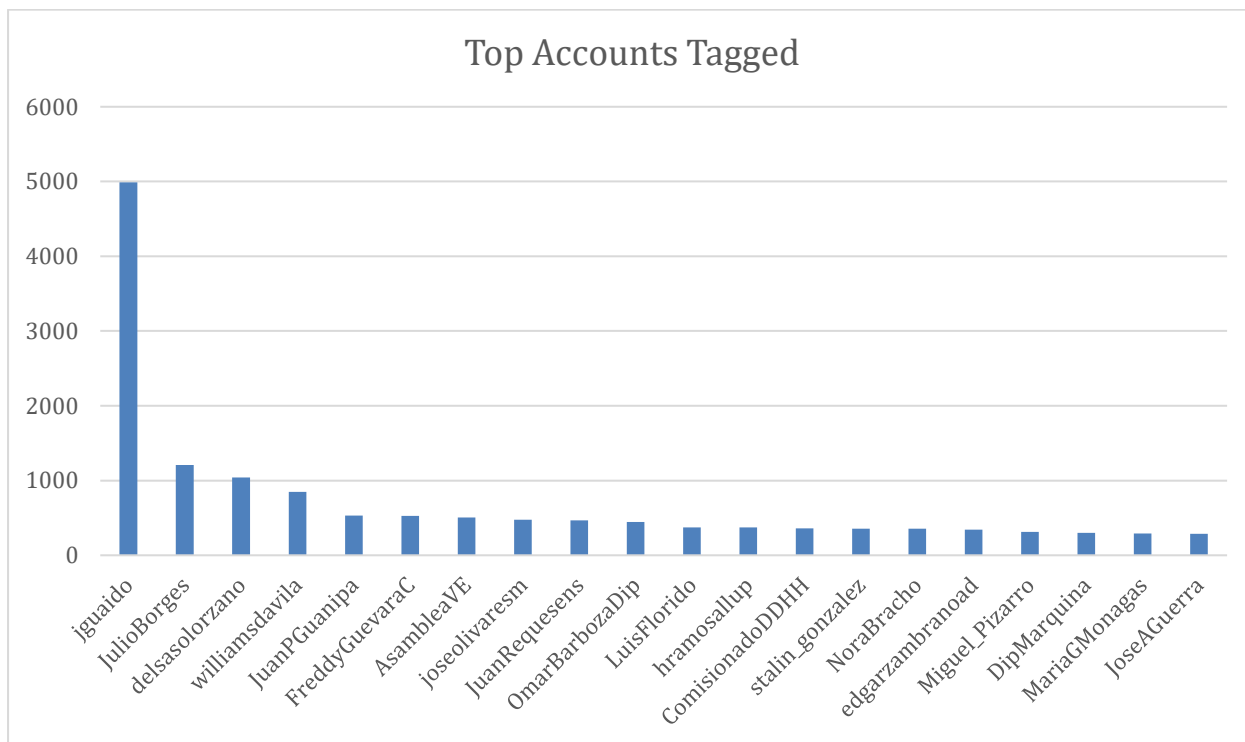
¹⁴ Original: “CITGO reporta los mejores resultados de su historia, a pesar de los juicios y litigios generados por el endeudamiento indiscriminado de la dictadura de Maduro.

Esto es una muestra de lo que podemos hacer, pero todavía falta defenderla y recuperar la democracia. <https://t.co/kqMbbqGj6X>”

¹⁵ Original: “En el 2019 ejercimos la Constitución e innovamos en lucha contra dictaduras, protegiendo activos evitamos mayores saqueos. Pero nos toca también cargar a cuestras y asumir la representación en el mundo de un país quebrado por el régimen.”

1.1 National Assembly (@AsambleaVE)

Overview



It is relevant to know that even though only the top 20 accounts were selected, the National Assembly tagged 763 accounts, a staggering 32649 times: of those, 76 were tagged 100 or more times. For Maduro’s National Assembly, for example, accounts were tagged 1314 times; for Maduro’s account it was 1087, for Guaidó’s account it was 1728. As per its engagement, the 2019 registered the biggest amount of engagement for them, as expected, and following the pattern of that of Guaidó, and also Maduro. Moreover, Guaidó’s legitimacy being linked to this legislative body called for attention to its activities: The formation of an interim government also implied the creation of different commissions, part of the National Assembly itself, to oversee different aspects of the administration. For a full list of them, it is possible to consult their official website: <https://www.asambleanacionalvenezuela.org/comisiones>.

Year	Tweets	Tweets per day that year	Average Favorites	Average Retweets	Average Replies
2017	6316	17,30410959	214,7134262	179,4669094	16,31792274
2018	2946	8,071232877	22,48811948	17,90665309	4,150033944
2019	6316	17,30410959	214,7134262	179,4669094	16,31792274
2020	11944	32,63387978	46,71743135	43,59184528	5,214333557
2021	7521	20,60547945	29,89868369	22,47254354	3,278287462
2022	2946	8,071232877	22,48811948	17,90665309	4,150033944

Tweets per day between 2017-2022: 6,579187586

Total amount of Tweets between 2017-2022: 14415

1.2 Hypothesis testing

Legitimacy (H1): Guaidó's legitimacy is entrenched in the international recognition his administration had gotten and the National Assembly itself. The building of diplomatic relations, and the display of mutual support for countries all over the world – although most notably the United States, the United Kingdom, and Spain. In a way, Guaidó's legitimacy and the National Assembly legitimacy go hand in hand: Guaidó's account is the most tagged account for the National Assembly by a huge landslide, and the National Assembly's account is also the most tagged account in Guaidó's timeline. Guaidó concentrated on both displaying the image of international support, as well as attempting to mobilize the population to protest.

Political competition (H2): given that Guaidó emerged to fill the leadership void that was left after the post-2014 arrests of opposition leaders, his main political competitor was not from the opposition, but Maduro himself. He portrayed Maduro as an illegitimate ruler, calling him “the usurper”, and addressed him directly (although never with tags to Maduro's account). On the other hand, the National Assembly does attempt to amplify Guaidó's message, as well as the voice of several other important opposition congresspeople.

Venezuelan nationalism (H3): Guaidó mentions *chavismo* or the “Chavista government” (referencing Maduro) once in 2019, twice in 2020, twice in 2021. His entire political discourse is based on Maduro's illegitimacy, and the necessity of alternation in government. He does address the deep humanitarian crisis, consistently tagging international organizations, and promotes the negotiations for humanitarian aid, but his idea of “nationalism” was rooted in the civic duty to protest and demand democratization. Unsurprisingly, his attempt to create a narrative of “Venezuelan nationalism” based on a long series of failed unsuccessful protests, also contributed to his progressive loss in popularity. Moreover, equating Maduro's government to Chávez's administration might have alienated a great portion of the population who still fondly remembered Chávez's times as a much-needed change in Venezuelan politics.

Public protests (H4): Guaidó's central topics for most peaks in activity and engagement are connected to the public protests. He rallied, organized, and promoted the participation of mass demonstrations. Since the protests were promoted mostly through hashtags indicating the date of the numerous rallies (notably, #4MVzlaALaCalle), they for the most part failed to also involve major content creators with a bigger platform and reach than Guaidó. There were almost no tags to other types of national and international media, nor to important Venezuelan personalities. The only exception being YouTube, in the case of the National Assembly.

2. Nicolás Maduro (@NicolasMaduro)

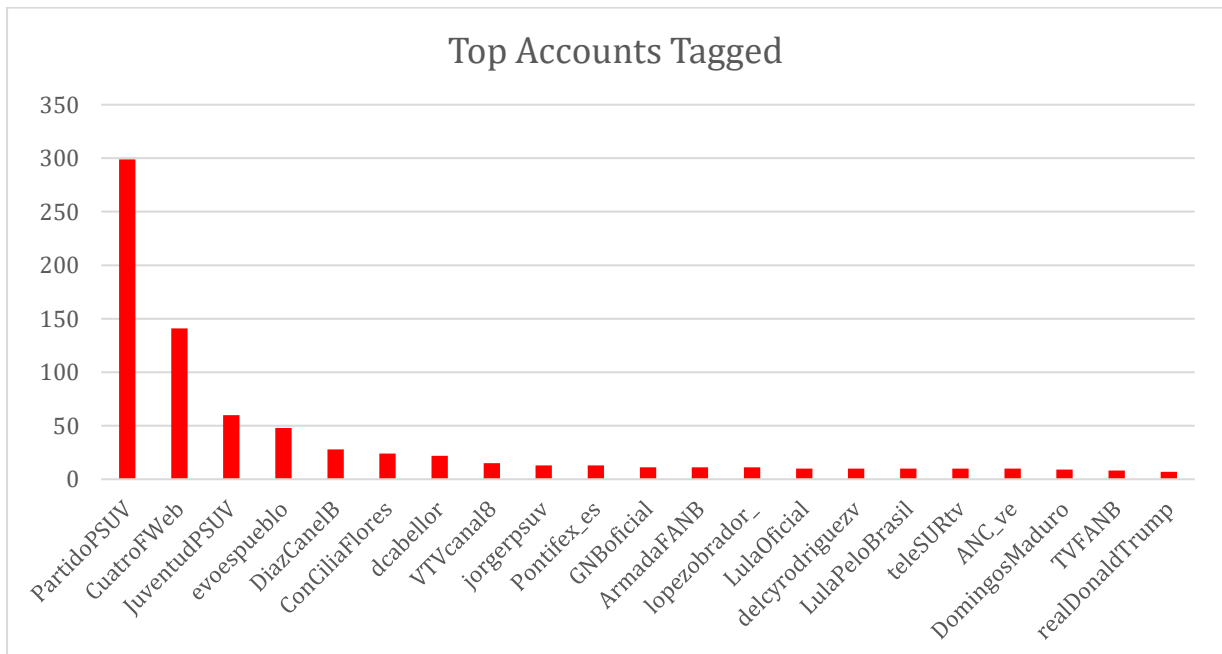
Overview

Year	Number of Tweets per day that year	Average Favorites	Average Retweets	Average Replies	
2017	875	2,397260274	1096,752	2332,442286	441,9154286
2018	2511	6,879452055	1328,579849	1847,243728	309,8829152
2019	2720	7,452054795	1972,590074	1835,289706	380,3088235
2020	2477	6,767759563	1677,04239	1787,473557	214,5704481
2021	2779	7,61369863	1457,968694	1716,851385	158,6948543
2022	3053	8,364383562	1994,105798	2285,702428	263,7093176

Tweets per day between 2017-2022: 6,579187586

Total amount of Tweets between 2017-2022: 14415

Top Accounts Tagged



General comments

Please refer to Graph B1 and Graph B2 in the Appendices section for a full picture of Maduro's Twitter timeline activity.

Maduro had different manners to refer to the National Armed forces, or Army-adjacent components: CEOFANB, ArmadaFANBVzla, Umbv_Fanb. TV Fanb, GNB FANB, EjercitoFANB. AMBN_FANB, and AMBFanb. He did so 20 times, which would place the Armed Forces in 5th place of "most interacted" if it was limited to a sole account. Most of these interactions spawn from 2019 forward. Funnily enough, the account "LulaPeloBrasil" is NOT the official account of Brazilian politician Lula Da Silva, and yet was tagged 10 times during this time. Lacking evidence of Lula's username changing, nor of his account being hacked, so it can only be attributed to a human mistake. After 2018, there were also 7 mentions of Donald Trump (@readonaldtrump), regarding sanctions, and the massive protests that occurred in 2018-2019: as shown later in the peak analysis, Maduro deemed the protests a manifestation of the US interference and personally blamed Trump for of the economic and political crisis of Venezuela.

Contrary to Juan Guaidó, Maduro was in no way an unknown personality in the political landscape. Before dying, populist leader Hugo Chávez asked "the Venezuelan people" to vote for him in case he was to perish to cancer. In 2013, there were several concerns about transparency in the elections where he was eventually named president of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. The behavior of the Chavista administration during the protests in 2013 that ensued would be the "mold" for the behavior of Maduro's administration during the protests of 2017. This includes how "in 2018, the Government registered 5,287 killings, purportedly for "resistance to authority," during such operations. Between 1 January and 19 May this year, another 1,569 people were killed, according to Government figures. Other sources suggest the figures may be much higher." (Office of the High Commissioner - United Nations 2019)

Maduro's political discourse is filled with references to his predecessor, and his overall discourse seems to be targeted towards the promotion and preservation of the Bolivarian Revolution. In his case, there's also a major quantitative increase in tweets from 2017 to 2018. He tweeted 875 times in 2017, and almost three times as much in 2018 (2511 tweets). In fact, Maduro showed to have a much more "demurred" behavior during 2017, where he

had called for “dialogue” with the opposition and seemed willing to negotiate (BBC News Mundo 2017). During the span of 2017-2022, he tweeted 14415 times, averaging 6.5791 tweets per day. Consider: for 2017, he tweeted 2.3972 times per day on average.

Peak 1 – 2019, Week 04 –21st January 2019 to 27th January 2019

The first peak of activity corresponds to the second peak for Guaidó (first without retweets). Maduro’s most liked tweet condemns Guaidó’s naming and deems it US’s doing, using “extraconstitutional means”. Once again, Guaidó is not referred to by first or last name. Additionally, there’s no explicit naming to the situation, except for calls to “defend the sovereignty”. The second most liked tweet continues to blame the “imperial aggressions” (referring to the United States), seemingly related to both the naming of Guaidó and the protests. The third tweet is an appeal to the Venezuelan population to go out and protest, “to defend the fatherlands stability” against coup d’états and intervention. In his 4th tweet, he thanked Russia, China, and Turkey and “all the governments and peoples around the world” for their support to his government. In other tweets from January 24th, and the following days he would explicitly also thank Mexico, Uruguay, and Belarus for their support.

He very insistently blames the public protests that Guaidó was calling support for, as resulting from the United States’ government machinations. He announced that he ordered the closing of the US consulates and embassies on January 25th. The previous year, he had already expelled the US Ambassador in Caracas, also accusing him of “meeting with the Venezuelan extreme right” and of conspiracy (Casey 2018). He also mentions different aspects of the National Armed forces, including the existence of “Amphibious vehicles/tanks” to “defend the fatherland”¹⁶. Interestingly, he also “commemorates the victims of the Holocaust” and calls for the “defense against fascism”, fascist being a common adjective to call the opposition,¹⁷ and consistently mentions Hugo Chávez during this whole week.

¹⁶ Original: Patrullamos las costas de Puerto Cabello en los Tanques Anfibios, dispuestos para la defensa de nuestra patria.

¹⁷ Original: En el Día Internacional de Conmemoración en Memoria de las Víctimas del Holocausto, rendimos homenaje a quienes sufrieron los efectos y las consecuencias nefastas del nazismo. Ante el resurgimiento de la violencia y las prácticas fascistas, los pueblos defenderemos La Paz.

Additionally, he announced the approved the expansion of one the Missions, Gran Misión Chamba Juvenil. In the past, this Mission was called “Gran Misión Saber y Trabajo” and “Misión Vuelvan Caracas”¹⁸. This particular social programme still works today, as a “bonus” of the “Plan de la Patria. This can be part of the “Bono de la Patria” (Lara 2023). This “Fatherland Bonus” is a social program in which Venezuelans must register to obtain a “Fatherland ID” (Carnet de la Patria). The amounts differ each month, and each month there are different “bonuses” which are announced in a similar way than Maduro announced this “expansion” of the Gran Misión Chamba Juvenil. This “expansion” often means extension and it’s heavily dependent on the personal approval of Maduro, as a president. Note for example the existence of the “Bono Guerra Económica” (Economic War Bonus), this being how Maduro refers to the sanctions imposed by the United States.

Peak 2 – 2022, Week 50 –12th December 2022 to 18th December 2022

The most liked tweet in this week regards deceased footballer Diego Armando Maradona, and Argentina winning the 2022 FIFA World Cup of football in Qatar. During the week, there were around two more tweets referring to him as “my friend Diego (Armando Maradona)”. Most of the replies obtained, which do have a minor spike compared to the rest of his tweets, were negative. However, the ratio for retweets during this week is higher than favorites, and replies. The retweets could potentially mean a mixed response, but slightly more “positive” and/or expressing support.

In Peak 2, there is a mention to the 2017 National Constituent Assembly, but no tag for them – as there never was an official Twitter account for it. Once again, he commemorates it as the “stopping the onslaught of the ultra-right”¹⁹. This week, he also made 7 book recommendations from different members of his cabinet. This week, he also heavily concentrates on the ALBA - TCP. This was due to the Alba Summit, that happened during the same week. It was held in Cuba. ALBA was founded in 2004 by Cuba and Venezuela, often cited in their official website as the labor of both Hugo Chávez and Fidel Castro (exact quote: “we renew our commitment to strengthen the integration and unity of our peoples as

¹⁸ <https://dds.cepal.org/bpsnc/programme?id=119>

¹⁹ Original: “Two years ago, the ANC elected in 2017 ceased its functions, our recognition to the constituents who responded to the call of the People, in the exercise of their supreme power, and stopped the onslaught of the ultra-right that sought to violate the Peace of Venezuela.”

the founding ideology of Commanders Hugo Chávez Frías and Fidel Castro Ruz.)²⁰ (ALBA-TCP 2021) (Paredes López 2022)²¹.

Peak 3 – 2019, Week 46 – 11th November 2019 to 17th November 2019

The biggest spike within this peak is a retweet to Evo Morales account, who as previously mentioned, was an important character in Maduro’s Twitter timeline. His expressed support for Evo surrounding his exit to Mexico after the Bolivian “coup d’état”. Considering that the Bolivian military supported the opposition in the middle of the massive manifestations happening against his possible reelection, and Morales’ strong ties to the Chavista government, this was to be expected. The same week, Maduro calls for the “Bolivan Armed Forces to reinstate the constitutional thread” and the “stopping of coup d’états”²².

The same week, he commemorated the 16th anniversary of the Misión Ribas²³, finishing it with “Long Live Chavez’s Missions”. This program aimed to “reintegrate (...) all those people who did not complete primary or secondary education”.²⁴ Although the reported aim was to bring the participants into the education and job market, even since its early years there has been major concern about its effectiveness (El Universal 2007), as well as major concerns in many respect. Nevertheless, its popularity and human/holistic approach has been praised (Revista Venezolana de Educación 2005) (Guillén and Feria Hernández 2009). After all, it pioneered in the country by creating a “distant studies” program, which allowed for plenty of flexibility for low-income and disadvantaged groups (the elderly and people with disability were strong participant groups). It also offered scholarships for people who would sign up, as an incentive to complete the program (Misiones Bolivarianas 2015). Unfortunately, this Mission does not escape the corruption and mismanagement allegation

²² Original: I call on the Bolivian Armed Forces to restore the constitutional thread, its only Commander in Chief is Evo Morales Ayma. The modernization made by the president @evoespueblo to the armed forces, was not to repress the people, it is to protect them. Enough of the coups d'état!

²³ Original: “Happy Birthday Ribas Mission! They are 16 years of liberating education at the service of the people. I send my hug to the facilitators and winners who do not faint and continue at the forefront of permanent formation for the productive development of the Homeland. Long Live Chavez's Missions!

²⁴

https://siteal.iiep.unesco.org/sites/default/files/sit_accion_files/republica_bolivariana_de_venezuela_minis.pdf

that plagued Maduro's administration (Transparencia Venezuela 2018) (Lucha de Clases 2004).

He, once again, mentions the National Constituent Assembly, in the 2nd anniversary of its creation, "which brought peace and tranquility to the Republic".²⁵ Similarly, he commemorates the nationalization of the Orinoco Oil belt, 12 years before, by Chávez. This effectively meant that the Venezuelan state oil company, PDVSA, took over the oil extracting projects that were taking place, as well as renaming the "partners". See: FACTBOX-Venezuela renames nationalized Orinoco oil schemes. The main companies affected being Chevron (US), Rosneft (Russia), Total Energies (France), Eni (Italy) and Repsol (Spain). As of now, however, "Despite President Maduro's repeated calls, large foreign investments are as yet not arriving in the Orinoco Belt, hampered by political standoffs and ongoing US sanctions (...)" (Margaret López 2022).

Peak 4 – 2019, Week 18 -29th April 2019 to 5th May 2019

This week, in the height of protests against his regime, Maduro decided to reiterate the support that he has obtained from the Armed Forces: his most popular tweet was connected to having met with high-ranking officials of different units of the Armed Forces, and them "expressing their support for Maduro".²⁶ In fact, this whole week simply re-estates, in different manners, the support of the military he holds. In total, 19 out of 53 tweets were related to either the Armed Forces directly – a bit more than a third – the Military Academy, or some specific branch of either of them.

Later, he emphasizes the "march of the working class". This week was also the same week in which Leopoldo López was freed from his house arrest – because of Guaidó's orders – and it was a week of incredible instability for Maduro's regime. The preceding week, and then the following week, were in fact the height of the conflict and massive protests in the

²⁵ Original: Two years have passed since that blessed day on which we summoned the original power, which resides non-transferably in the Venezuelan people, to elect a plenipotentiary National Constituent Assembly that would bring peace and tranquility to the Republic. Long live the Constituent Power!

²⁶ Original: Nervios de Acero! He conversado con los Comandantes de todas las REDI y ZODI del País, quienes me han manifestado su total lealtad al Pueblo, a la Constitución y a la Patria. Llamo a la máxima movilización popular para asegurar la victoria de la Paz. ¡Venceremos!

country. In fact, Maduro rallied for a march to support him; on the days following one of the marches the opposition had called for, against his regime (BBC News Mundo 2019).

Nevertheless, Maduro's attempt to project an image of popular support was far from successful in the short term, within the country. In fact, 2019 was the most active year of protests in the country amounting to 16,739 protests for the entirety of the year as reported by the Observatorio Venezolano de Conflictividad Social (OVCS). The same NGO registered 1,963 protests across the country over the month of April 2019 (Observatorio Venezolano de Conflictividad Social 2020).

A month earlier, starting on March 7th, there would be nationwide power outage affecting the whole country. This power outage, which was partially addressed only after 24 hours, continued to affect entire regions in the country until later the same month, as far as the end of it (Sardiña 2020). The power outages would continue during the entire year and became the new normal for Venezuelans. Still in 2022, there were no signs to the electricity problem to be solved (Seijas Meneses 2022).

2.1 Maduro's National Assembly (@Asamblea_Ven)

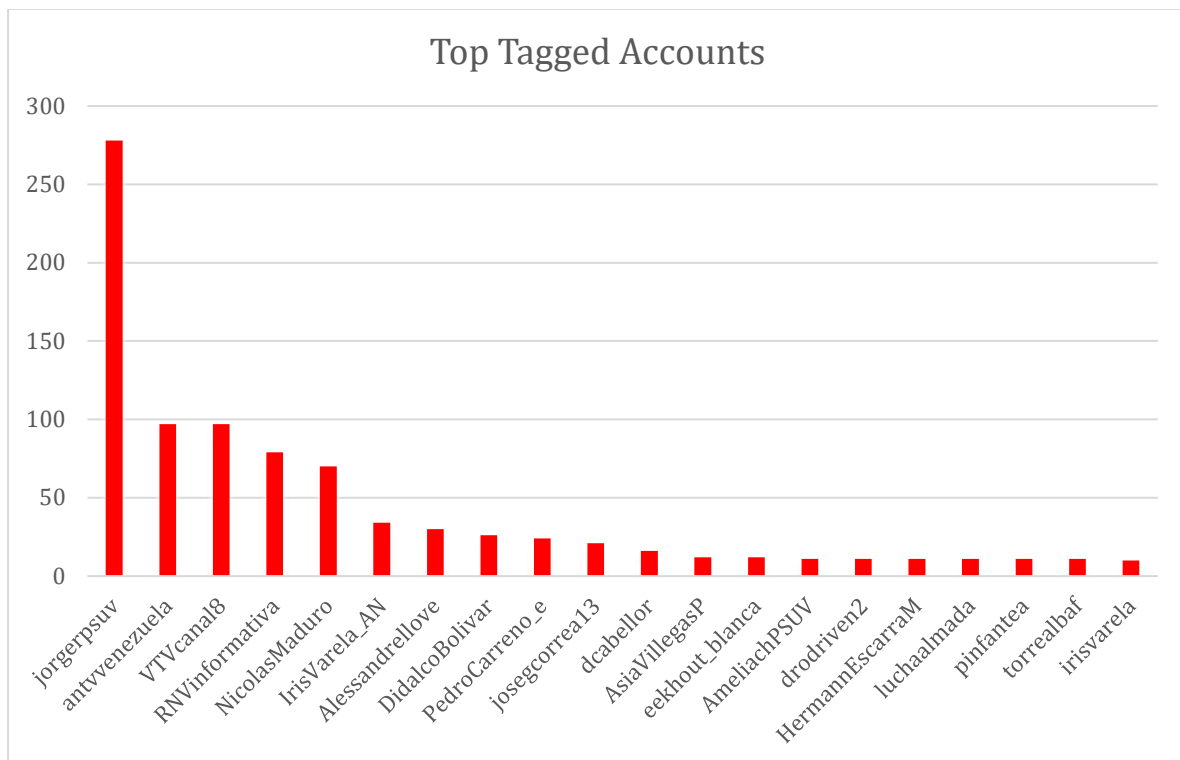
Overview

Year	Tweets	Average tweets per day that year	Average Favorites	Average Retweets	Average Replies
2021	1110	3,04109589	36,67567568	56,76846847	2,612612613
2022	1968	5,391780822	35,62398374	110,3175813	2,018800813

Tweets per day between 2021-2022: 4,216438356

Total amount of Tweets between 2017-2022: 3078

Top Tagged Accounts



As mentioned before, Maduro’s National Assembly was officially formed in 2021. The Venezuelan opposition, in the form of the political parties that had seats in the National Assembly that Maduro attempted to dissolve, decided not to participate in these elections. For this dissertation, I attempted to find an official account for the predecessor to Maduro’s National Assembly: the Constituent National Assembly. However, there was no official Twitter account created, and it is in fact quite hard to find any further information about the plenaries and the Constituent National Assembly’s activities. For the most part, what is evident is that its main goal of creating a new constitution was not fulfilled (BBC News Mundo 2020). This new National Assembly (Maduro’s) is meant to replace the “old” one (Guaidó’s - @AsambleaVE). This @Asamblea_Ven account was officially created in February 2021, and its first tweet concerned the plenaries taking place. It also was fairly active on Twitter, despite not generating much engagement. Nevertheless, it could be noted that while the engagement generated by the @AsambleaVE account was majorly decreased overtime, the @Asamblea_Ven account doubled the amount of retweets a in a year, and almost did the same for the amount of tweets in the year. The account it has tagged the most is that of Jorge Rodríguez, its current chairman/president. The next following most tagged

accounts are those of national TV stations, @ANTVVENEZUELA being the account belonging to the National Assembly TV station, which traditionally has broadcasted the plenary sessions of the Venezuela National Assembly, and VTV (Venezolana de Televisión), the

1.2 Hypothesis testing

Legitimacy (H1): There is no doubt that Maduro's legitimacy relies upon him having the military support to remain in power. His constant mention of different aspects of the military throughout the period studied corroborates this assumption. Nevertheless, it is in the peaks studied where the most dramatic display of military power is truly shown. This power exhibition is framed as "to fight the foreign intervention" at a time where most protests in the country consisted of Venezuelans demanding an improvement in the quality of their lives. The Venezuelan military holds a special power position and is especially privileged under Maduro's administration. Take, for example, the assignment of the previously described "bonuses". Public employees²⁷ Bono Guerra Económica (DEPOR 2023) Bs (16.48 USD-23.60 USD) (DEPOR, 2023) and Formación (Bono de y Formación) varying between 50 USD and 295 USD (Diario de los Andes 2023). Maduro's legitimacy also seems rooted in his own relationship to Hugo Chávez, and the constant remembrance of Chávez's mandate. In his tweets, he tries to "merge" his predecessor's image with his own. The support of the international community comes from a very limited of countries, and their leaders, constantly tagged throughout this period (Mexico, Belarus, Russia, China, Uruguay, and Turkey)

Political competition (H2): Maduro concentrates on the exaltation of his own party, PSUV (*Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela*, Venezuela's United Socialist Party). Venezuela having a dominant party system, where the party of power dwarfs all the oppositions, this comes as no surprise. He interacts with the PSUV account the most, and largely ignores any semblance of political competition outside of this. He goes a step further than Guaidó, and simply does not mention Guaidó's name in his tweets. He has managed to establish in his tweets, as well as he has done in various occasions using different media, that his "biggest enemy" is the United States and its foreign intervention, completely disregarding the existence of any possible internal opposition to his regime. All in all, he very smartly avoids naming the main figures of the opposition, to avoid lending power to them.

²⁷ 24,57 Bs for each dollar (official exchange rate by the Venezuelan Central Bank, on April 17th 2023).

Venezuelan nationalism (H3): For Nicolas Maduro, it is fundamental to remember that his whole mandate is tied to the Venezuelan nationalism. He essentially equates his government to “the Bolivarian Revolution” and even more so to a “Chávez legacy”. Maduro’s interpretation of nationalism is heavily tied to Chávez, and to Simon Bolívar and other historical figures of the independence movement of the XIX century. This a consistent topic throughout his tweets; Maduro’s Twitter timeline is full of “anniversaries” and commemoration” of the past: more specifically, to both Bolívar and Chávez’s times. This is also evident in his peaks of activities.

Public protests (H4): Maduro completely disregards the public protests happening against his regime. He instead frames them as the result of United State intervention and the “extreme-right” doing, and therefore as an illegitimate infringement upon Venezuelan sovereignty with ideological motivations. He deems them as a threat to public order and flaunts his military power to suppress them. In this century, Venezuela had not known such brutal repression against protestors, until the beginning of his regime. In this same realm, he attempts to create an image of public support, by discussing the “working class march” in a time where Venezuelans had taken the streets to protests the living conditions under his regime.

Conclusion

By analyzing these accounts and testing these hypotheses, several aspects of their political discourse and agenda have become clear. For one (H1), Maduro's legitimacy is deeply rooted in his support from the Venezuelan Armed Forces; Guaidó's claim rested on the legitimacy of the National Assembly, and the international support and recognition of his administration. When it comes to political competition (H2), Maduro smartly frames it as if the true "opposing party" to his government is the United States' government as a whole, and never once acknowledges Guaidó using his name, or even the public protests as such, calling them instead terrorist attacks to peace, and uses state TV stations' platform to amplify his message; for Guaidó, who during this period of time was the face of the unified opposition, the sole competitor is Maduro, to whom he refers constantly and calls "The Usurper". For Venezuelan nationalism (H3), Guaidó attempts to shift the idea of nationalism to include protesting as a civil duty, as a sort of commitment to Venezuelan democracy. Nevertheless, by equating Maduro's regime to that of Chávez, he seems to partially neglect a portion of the population who so strongly has supported the social welfare that has been a staple of the chavista government; Maduro argues that his government is the direct equivalent to "the Bolivarian Revolution", and constantly reminisces about Chávez's government and legacy. Finally, the public protests (H4): both politicians' most engaging tweets were connected to the protests that occurred in 2019. In these peaks of activity, Maduro's boasted the Armed Forces' support of his regime; Guaidó kept rallying for people to protest it. Additionally, both attempted to project an image of international support. Maduro used his platform to announce "Bonos de la Patria" (Fatherland Bonuses); Guaidó used it to promote legal defense mechanisms that Venezuelans abroad could use, such as the Temporary Protected Status in the United States. Both Maduro and Guaidó saw an increase in replies in relation to their favorites and retweets in certain weeks, possibly indicating a mostly negative reaction.

It is important to note that beside analyzing the peaks of activity covered in this dissertation, a more comprehensive study of this topic would require an evaluation of each individual increase in replies and/or change in ratio of replies and retweets to favorites would require

further analysis of a similar data set in order to determine the core of the negative reactions. Similarly, it would be necessary to evaluate these engagement pattern with that of politicians in a similar context (other Latin American heads of state, for example), and with other important personalities using the platform to have a better understanding of the baseline in which their pattern are different to the norm. Furthermore, it would be beneficial to perform a sentiment analysis on their tweets and the answers obtained in order to assess what are the major concerns for these user's followers.

Although using tweets *alone* is not nearly enough to create a whole political campaign, understanding the demographic reached and its response on Twitter could provide insights into improving politicians' communication strategy. After all, from afar, it is easy to misjudge Venezuelan politics, but by looking at these microinteractions in a macro context we can gain a better understanding of the very complex political panorama.

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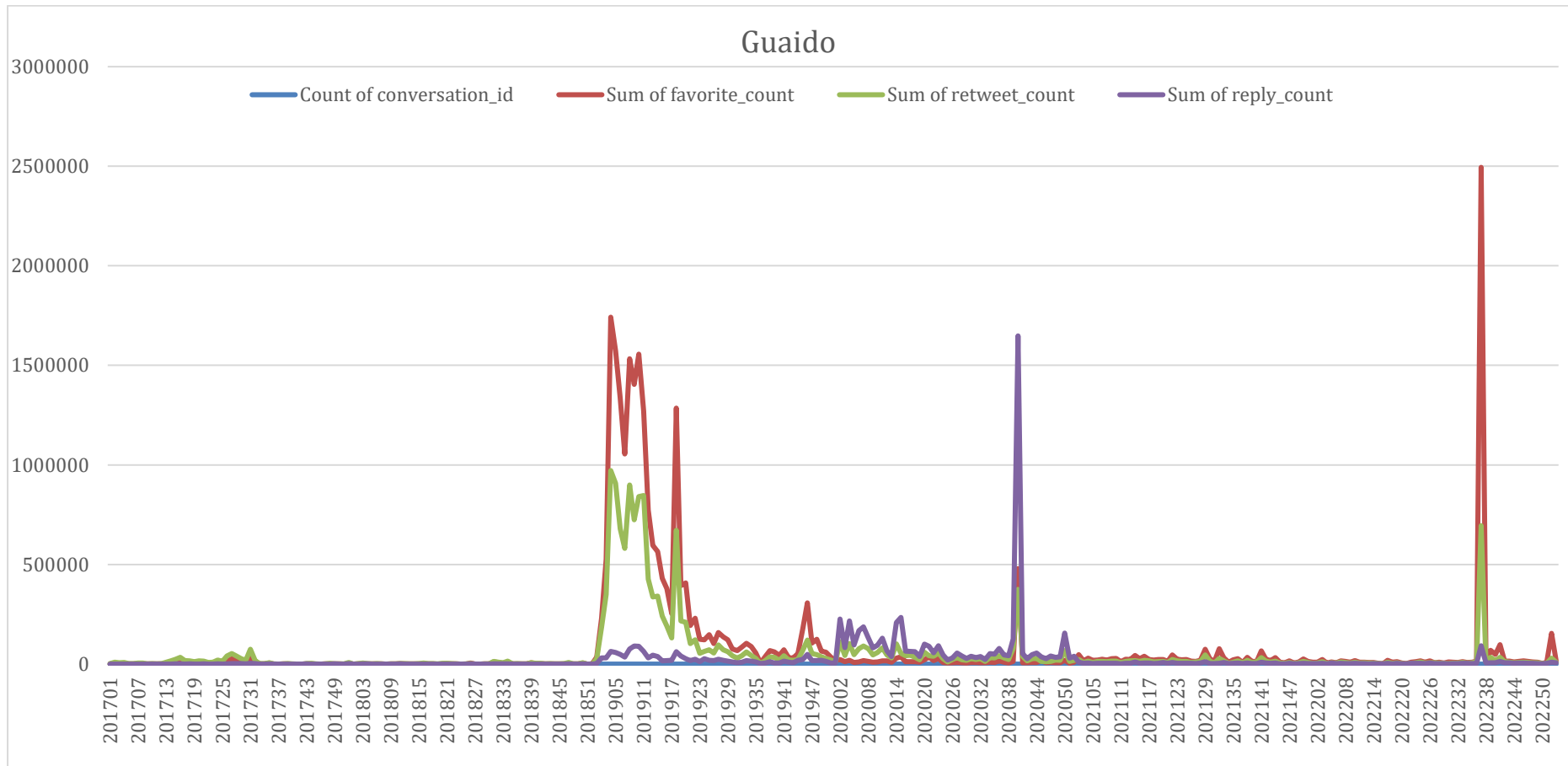
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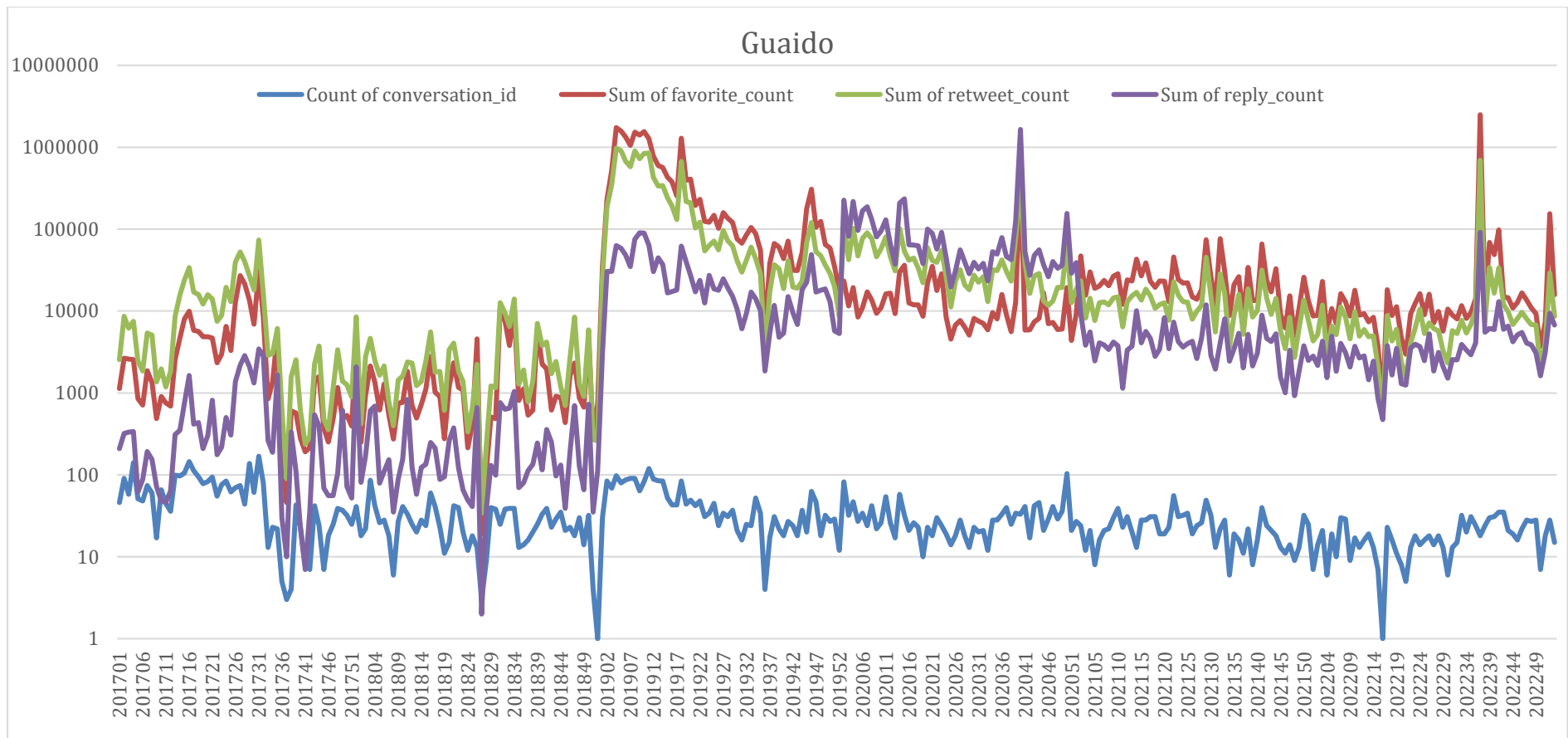
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Appendices

Guaidó's Twitter timeline activity graphs

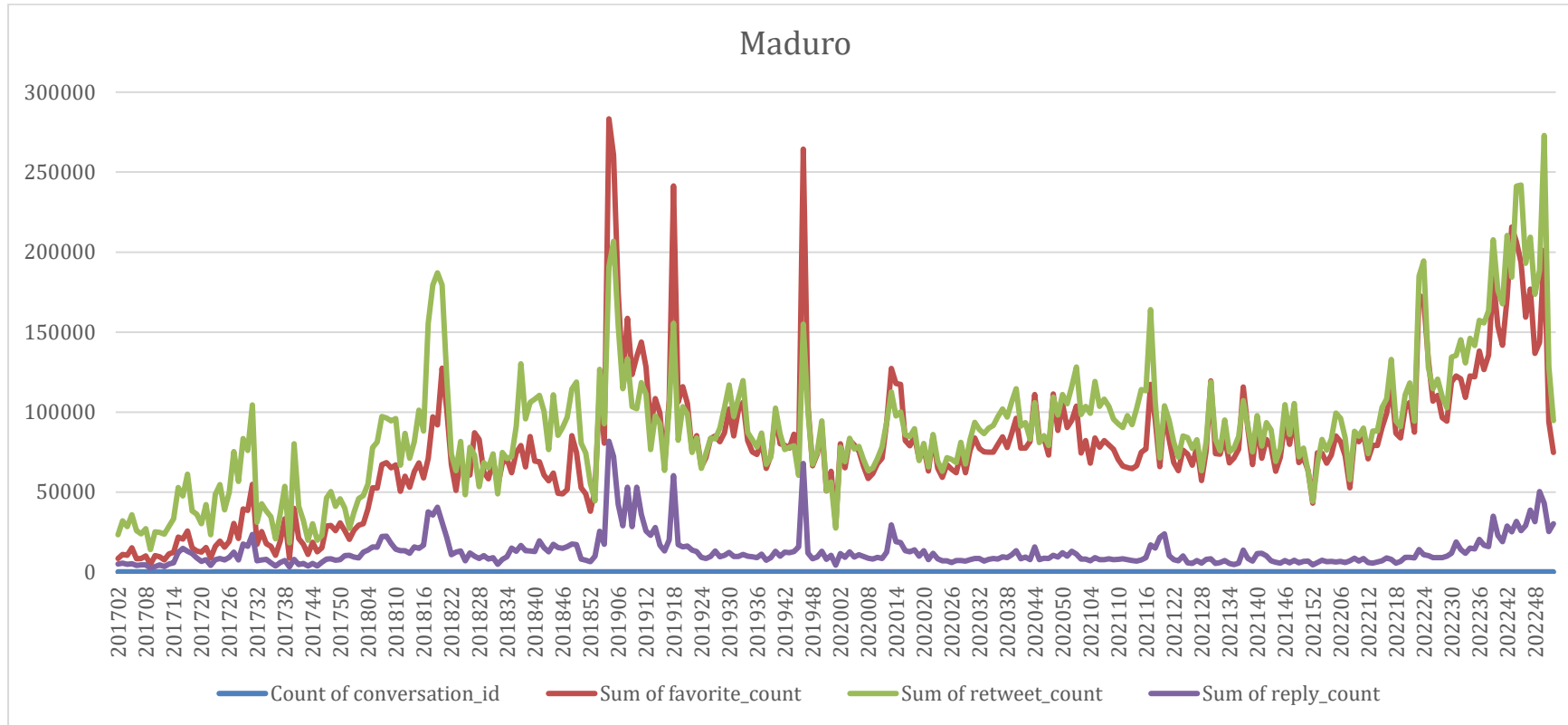


Graph A1 – Guaidó's Twitter timeline activity graph, without logarithmic scale

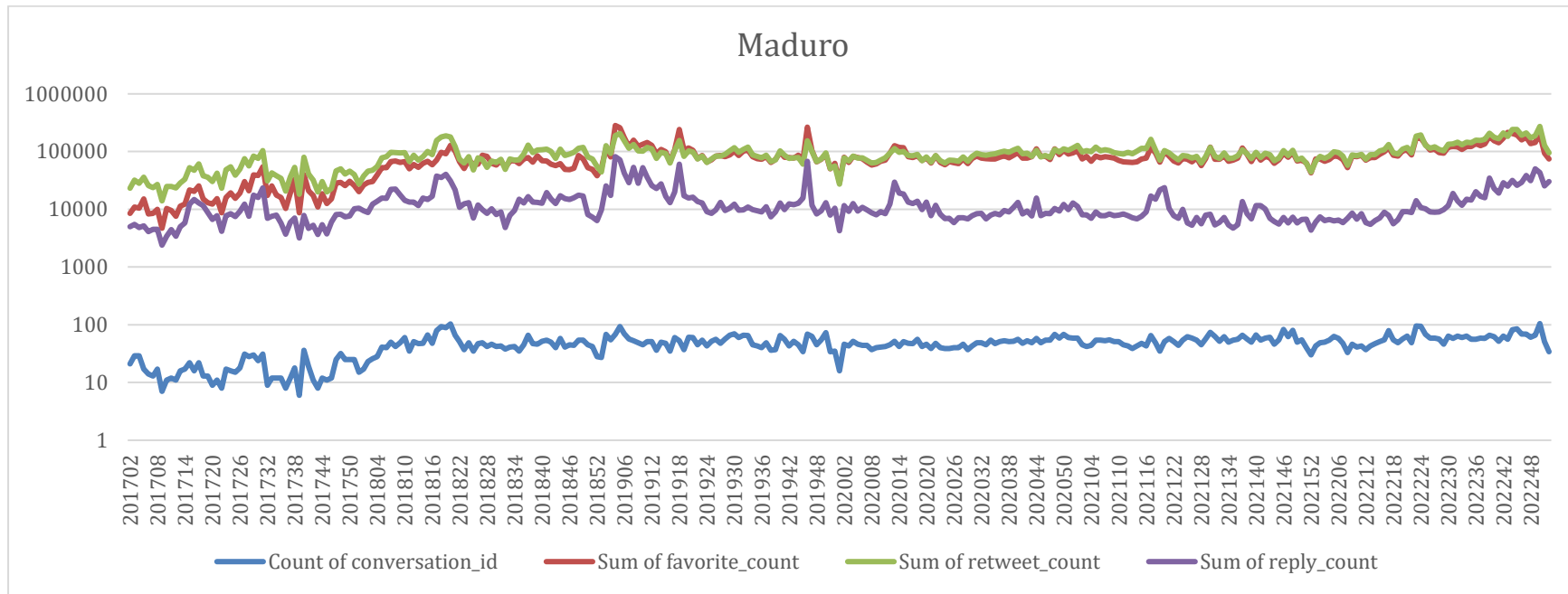


Graph A2 – Guaidó’s Twitter timeline activity graph, with logarithmic scale (10)

Maduro's Twitter timeline activity graphs



Graph B1 – Maduro's Twitter timeline activity graph, without logarithmic scale



Graph B2 – Maduro’s Twitter timeline activity graph, with logarithmic scale (10)

