


Sovereignty, Power Politics and International Law: An Analysis of the United States' Arrest of Venezuela's President and Its Implications for Nigeria and Africa

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Abstract

Background of Study: The principles of state sovereignty, non-intervention, and head-of-state immunity are foundational to the international legal framework. These principles, enshrined in the United Nations Charter and customary international law, are increasingly challenged by the unilateral actions of powerful states. The 2026 arrest of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro by the United States serves as a significant case that tests these principles.

Aims and Scope of Paper: This study aims to explore the legal and political issues surrounding the arrest of President Maduro, analyze how the incident highlights contemporary international power dynamics, and assess the implications of this event for Nigeria and African states within the broader context of international law and governance.

Methods: The research adopts a descriptive and analytical qualitative approach, utilizing secondary data from international legal instruments, scholarly articles, institutional reports, and reputable media outlets. The data is analyzed through qualitative content and thematic analysis, underpinned by international legal norms theory and realist power politics theory.

Results: The arrest of President Maduro presents a serious challenge to key international legal principles, such as sovereignty, the prohibition on the use of force, and head-of-state immunity, as it lacked host-state consent and UN Security Council authorization. The incident also underscores structural power imbalances in the international system, with the selective enforcement of legal norms and limited capacity of global institutions to regulate dominant powers.

Conclusion: Although international law remains crucial in theory, its effectiveness is constrained by power politics, as seen in the Maduro case. The study emphasizes the need for African states to engage in regional solidarity and collective diplomacy. It contributes to scholarly debates by combining legal and realist perspectives and highlighting African strategic concerns in global governance discussions.

A. Introduction

State sovereignty and the principle of non-intervention constitute the foundational pillars of the modern international legal and political order. Since the codification of these principles in the 1945 United Nations Charter, particularly under Article 2(4), states have been legally bound to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of other states, except under narrowly defined circumstances such as self-defence or collective security authorized by the United

Nations Security Council (Anderson, 2012; Shaw, 2017). These norms were designed to stabilise international relations, prevent arbitrary coercion, and protect weaker states from domination by more powerful actors within an inherently anarchic international system. Despite this normative framework, the conduct of international relations has continued to reflect deep tensions between legal restraint and power politics. Scholars of realism have long argued that international law operates within, rather than above, a system driven primarily by state interests, security imperatives, and asymmetries of power (Mitchell, 2017; Chimni, 2017). From this perspective, legal norms constrain state behaviour only insofar as they align with the strategic interests of powerful states. When such norms are perceived as obstacles, they may be bypassed or reinterpreted to justify unilateral action. This enduring tension between law and power has become increasingly visible in contemporary global politics, particularly in cases involving extraterritorial enforcement, military intervention, and the selective application of international legal principles.

The reported arrest of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro by the United States in January 2026 represents a striking illustration of this tension. The operation, carried out without the consent of the Venezuelan government and without authorisation from the United Nations Security Council, immediately raised fundamental legal questions concerning sovereignty, territorial integrity, head-of-state immunity, and the prohibition on the use of force. Under customary international law and established doctrine, sitting heads of state enjoy personal immunity from foreign criminal jurisdiction, a protection rooted in the principles of sovereign equality and the functional necessity of stable diplomatic relations (Crawford & Brownlie, 2019; Bantekas & Oette, 2013). While international criminal tribunals such as the International Criminal Court may, under specific treaty-based mandates, override such immunity for grave international crimes, unilateral enforcement by a foreign state on another state's territory remains highly contested and legally constrained (Shaw, 2017). Existing scholarly literature has extensively examined the doctrines of sovereignty, non-intervention, and head-of-state immunity, as well as the realist critique of international law's effectiveness (Dobos, 2011; Trung, 2024). Likewise, numerous studies have analysed Western interventions in the Global South and their implications for the rules-based international order. However, there remains a notable gap in the literature regarding the systematic analysis of unilateral extraterritorial arrests of sitting heads of state, particularly through a combined framework of realist power politics and international legal norms, and with explicit attention to the strategic lessons for African states. Much of the existing discourse focuses on Latin America, the Middle East, or great-power rivalry, often overlooking how such precedents resonate within regions historically vulnerable to external intervention, such as Africa.

This gap is especially significant given Africa's historical experience with colonial domination, Cold War proxy conflicts, and contemporary external security engagements, which have repeatedly challenged the continent's sovereignty and political autonomy (Adebajo, 2014; Basiru & Osunkoya, 2021). For African states, including Nigeria, the Maduro case is not merely a distant diplomatic controversy but a potential warning signal about the fragility of sovereign protections in an international system where enforcement of legal norms is uneven and heavily influenced by power asymmetries. The incident raises critical questions about whether international law can effectively shield weaker states from unilateral coercive actions by dominant powers and what strategies African states can adopt to mitigate such vulnerabilities. Against this background, the purpose of this study is threefold. First, it seeks to examine the legal and political context surrounding the arrest of President Nicolás Maduro, with particular emphasis on sovereignty, non-intervention, and head-of-state immunity under international law. Second, it analyses the incident through the lens of power politics to assess how realist dynamics shape state behaviour and the practical operation of international legal norms. Third, it evaluates the broader implications of the incident for Nigeria and African states, focusing on the risks posed by weak global enforcement mechanisms and the strategic importance of regional cooperation, collective diplomacy, and multilateral engagement.

Research Questions : What legal and political issues arise from the arrest of President Nicolás Maduro by the United States?, How does the incident reflect contemporary international power dynamics? What lessons can Nigeria and African states draw from the event?

B. Research Methods

The study employs a descriptive and analytical research design. Descriptively, it documents and contextualises the reported arrest of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro by the United States, including official statements, international reactions, and relevant legal frameworks. Analytically, it interrogates the incident through the lenses of international legal norms and realist power politics, assessing its conformity with established principles such as sovereignty, non-intervention, and head-of-state immunity. This combined design enables the study to move beyond narration of events to systematic interpretation and explanation of their legal and political significance (Freistein et al., 2025).

The study relies exclusively on secondary sources, as the subject matter concerns international legal norms, state conduct, and global political reactions rather than individual attitudes or primary field data. Data were drawn from three main categories of reputable and verifiable sources: International legal texts and instruments, including the United Nations Charter, customary international law principles, and authoritative international law textbooks. Scholarly publications, such as peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, and policy-oriented research by recognised scholars in international law and international relations. Credible international media and institutional reports, particularly from established outlets and organisations such as Reuters, the United Nations, African Union communications, and leading policy think tanks. These sources were selected based on their credibility, institutional reliability, and relevance to the research questions. Opinion blogs, unverified reports, and speculative commentary were deliberately excluded to ensure analytical rigour and factual accuracy.

Data collected from secondary sources were analysed using qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis. First, relevant texts were systematically reviewed to identify recurring legal and political themes, including sovereignty, use of force, non-intervention, head-of-state immunity, and power asymmetry. Second, these themes were organised and interpreted within the study's theoretical framework, drawing on realist theory and international legal norms theory. The analysis followed a theory-guided interpretive approach, whereby empirical observations from the Maduro incident were examined in light of established theoretical propositions. For instance, realist explanations of unilateral action by powerful states were contrasted with normative legal expectations embedded in the UN Charter and customary international law. This approach is consistent with qualitative analytical practices in international relations research, where theory is used to structure interpretation rather than to test statistical hypotheses (Moravcsik, 2014).

The scope of the study is limited to the legal and political dimensions of the reported arrest of President Nicolás Maduro and its implications for Nigeria and African states. It does not seek to adjudicate criminal responsibility, assess the factual merits of allegations against Maduro, or provide a military or operational analysis of the arrest itself. Rather, the emphasis is on normative legality, power dynamics, and strategic lessons. A key limitation of the study is its reliance on secondary data, which may reflect the perspectives and framing of source institutions. However, this limitation is mitigated by the use of multiple independent and reputable sources and by cross-checking claims across legal, academic, and institutional materials. Additionally, because the study is qualitative, its findings are analytical and interpretive rather than predictive or generalizable in a statistical sense, which is consistent with its objectives and methodological orientation. The study adheres to standard ethical principles in academic research. All sources are properly cited to avoid plagiarism, and interpretations are grounded in verifiable evidence rather than conjecture. As the research relies solely on publicly available secondary data, it does not involve human subjects and therefore raises no direct ethical risks related to consent or confidentiality.

C. Results and Discussion

The findings presented in this section are derived from a qualitative thematic analysis of secondary data, including international legal instruments, scholarly literature, institutional documents, and reports from reputable international organisations and media outlets. The analysis identified recurring legal and political patterns relevant to the study. Accordingly, the results are organised in line with the three research questions, with each subsection highlighting the dominant themes that emerged from the data concerning the legal and political issues surrounding the arrest of Venezuela's president, the

incident's reflection of contemporary international power dynamics, and the implications for Nigeria and African states.

Legal and Political Issues Arising from the Arrest of President Nicolás Maduro

Using qualitative content and thematic analysis of secondary data, recurring legal and political themes were identified, systematically reviewed, and then interpreted within the study's theoretical framework grounded in international legal norms theory and realist power politics theory. The themes reported below reflect consistent patterns in how international legal authorities, states, and expert commentators described the arrest of President Nicolás Maduro. A dominant theme emerging from the data concerns sovereignty and the use of force. A large body of legal commentary and official reactions consistently framed the U.S. operation that resulted in Maduro's capture as a breach of Venezuela's territorial sovereignty and a violation of core principles of international law (Joseph, 2019; Ahmed, 2026). Specifically, many analysts noted that Article 2(4) of the United Nations Charter prohibits the threat or use of force against the political independence or territorial integrity of any state, and that the U.S. military action in Caracas lacked authorising consent from Venezuela and had no approval from the United Nations Security Council (Lamour, 2025).

For example, expert legal commentaries characterised the action as a significant violation of Venezuelan sovereignty, involving strikes on military targets and the forcible abduction of a sitting president, without any identifiable legal basis under the Charter's prohibition on the use of force (O'Connell, 2019; Ruys, 2014). In these sources, the operation was repeatedly described as transboundary abduction of a head of state, conducted without host-state consent or a Security Council mandate. Consistent with this theme, official statements from states such as Venezuela and international associations denounced the action as aggression against Venezuelan territory and people, emphasising that it threatened international peace and security and undermined respect for sovereign equality (2018). These statements reiterated that sovereignty and non-intervention are foundational to the UN Charter and should not be breached unilaterally. Another consistent theme in the data pertains to head-of-state immunity. Secondary sources reported that commentators and legal analysts highlighted the long-standing doctrine of personal immunity (*immunity racione personae*), under which sitting heads of state are ordinarily immune from the criminal jurisdiction of foreign states. These sources noted that international law generally protects foreign heads of state from arrest, detention, or prosecution by other states while in office, and that such protections are grounded in customary international law and reinforced by treaties such as the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations.

Within this theme, legal experts drew a clear distinction between domestic criminal indictments and internationally recognised jurisdictional authority. The data show that although the United States had domestic charges (e.g., narcotics and narco-terrorism counts) against Maduro, these did not constitute an internationally sanctioned basis for entering Venezuela and detaining its president. Secondary analyses emphasised that formal extradition procedures or multilateral legal mechanisms are the recognised pathways for transferring individuals between jurisdictions, and that bypassing these channels constitutes a breach of established legal norms. Moreover, commentators pointed out that the United States has, in its domestic jurisprudence, historically treated the extraterritorial seizure of leaders as legally acceptable under doctrines such as *male captus bene detentus* (wrongful capture does not bar prosecution), but this position diverges from general principles of customary international law regarding head-of-state immunity. While U.S. domestic practice may assert jurisdiction, it remains distinct from international norms that ordinarily protect sitting foreign leaders. A third significant theme revealed by the data concerns international political responses and diplomatic repercussions. The arrest and its circumstances prompted widespread comment from states and international actors, many of which framed the incident in terms of violations of international law and breaches of sovereignty. For instance, multiple national governments issued statements condemning the U.S. action as contrary to international law and harmful to regional stability, emphasising adherence to legal norms such as non-intervention and peaceful dispute resolution.

In line with this, several states explicitly described the operation as an assault on sovereignty. Latin American leaders, including representatives from Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, and other regional actors, expressed concern that the action undermined respect for sovereignty and could destabilise the region. These reactions illustrate how political narratives intersect with legal framings, with actors appealing to international legal principles to underscore their political positions. At the same time, some political responses highlighted divergent narratives and politicisation of legal justifications. While many states underscored legal norms, others couched their reactions in broader political terms—focusing on issues such as democratisation, security, or legitimacy of Maduro's leadership—without directly engaging

with the legal dimensions. This pattern suggests competing narrative frames in the international political arena, reflecting both legal concerns and broader strategic considerations.

Reflection of Contemporary International Power Dynamics

Qualitative thematic analysis of secondary legal, institutional, and scholarly sources reveals that the arrest of President Nicolás Maduro was widely interpreted as reflecting contemporary international power dynamics characterised by unilateralism, power asymmetry, and selective enforcement of international law. Three dominant and recurring themes emerged from the data: (1) unilateral action by a dominant power, (2) selective application and enforcement of international legal norms, and (3) institutional constraints within the United Nations system, particularly the Security Council.

A central theme across the analysed sources is the characterisation of the United States' action as a unilateral exercise of power conducted outside established multilateral authorisation mechanisms. Reports and legal commentaries consistently noted that the arrest was carried out without prior approval from the United Nations Security Council and without reliance on collective security procedures envisioned under Chapter VII of the UN Charter (Nichols, 2026; Chatham House, 2026). The absence of multilateral endorsement was repeatedly highlighted as indicative of a broader pattern in which powerful states act independently when pursuing perceived strategic or security objectives. The data further reveal that power asymmetry significantly shaped both the execution and consequences of the operation. Commentators observed that the United States' military, political, and institutional dominance enabled it to conduct the operation with limited immediate legal or diplomatic repercussions. Several analyses explicitly contrasted this outcome with the likely response had a weaker state undertaken a similar action against a powerful actor, underscoring how relative power influences permissible behaviour in practice, even where formal legal rules appear uniform (Dayan & Pedahzur, 2025). This pattern aligns with realist interpretations identified in the literature reviewed, which emphasise that dominant states are more capable of bypassing multilateral constraints due to their superior material capabilities and global influence (McKeil, 2022). Importantly, the finding here does not assess the legitimacy of such behaviour but reports that unilateralism by a dominant power was a consistent descriptor used across the data.

A second major theme emerging from the data concerns the uneven application and enforcement of international legal norms, particularly regarding the use of force and respect for sovereignty. Legal scholars and institutional observers repeatedly noted that while international law formally applies equally to all states, its enforcement is highly contingent on power relations (Shaw, 2017; Crawford & Brownlie, 2019). In the Maduro case, sources observed that despite widespread legal criticism, no effective enforcement mechanism was activated against the United States, reinforcing perceptions of selective accountability (Reuters, 2026). The data also highlight that international legal institutions lack coercive authority over major powers, especially when those powers reject or reinterpret legal constraints. Commentaries from policy institutions and legal experts emphasised that reactions to the arrest demonstrated the limited capacity of international law to restrain hegemonic actors in the absence of political consensus or enforcement capability (Chatham House, 2026; Poddar, 2025). This pattern was repeatedly framed as illustrative of a broader global trend in which legal norms are more rigorously applied to weaker states than to dominant ones. Across the sources reviewed, this selective enforcement was not presented as anomalous but as structural, reflecting longstanding critiques of the international legal system's dependence on state consent and power hierarchies (Prost, 2017; Shaw, 2017).

A third theme consistently identified in the data relates to institutional constraints within the United Nations system, particularly the role of the UN Security Council. Secondary sources repeatedly emphasised that the Council's structure—most notably the veto power held by permanent members—significantly limits its capacity to respond effectively to actions undertaken by those same members (United Nations debates cited in Reuters, 2026). Reports from UN proceedings indicated that although the legality of the arrest was debated, institutional paralysis prevented collective action, as permanent members exercised or threatened vetoes to block resolutions critical of the United States. This pattern was widely cited as evidence of a systemic enforcement gap within the global security architecture, where legal scrutiny does not translate into binding outcomes when major powers are involved (UN Security Council discussions reported in Reuters, 2026). International organizations and legal observers acknowledged these constraints explicitly, noting that the UN's enforcement mechanisms are politically conditioned rather than automatic, and that this reality weakens the deterrent function of international law (Chatham House, 2026; Shaw, 2017). The data reveal that the Maduro incident was commonly used as an example of how institutional design and power politics intersect to limit multilateral accountability.

Implications and Lessons for Nigeria and African States

The qualitative thematic analysis of secondary sources reveals that the arrest of President Nicolás Maduro was widely interpreted by African institutions, policymakers, and scholars as having

direct relevance for Africa, particularly in relation to sovereignty, external intervention, and the protection afforded to weaker states in the international system. Three interrelated themes consistently emerged from the data: (1) perceived vulnerability of weaker states, (2) limitations of global legal protection mechanisms, and (3) an emerging emphasis on regionalism and collective diplomacy.

A dominant theme across African institutional statements and scholarly commentary is the perception that the Maduro incident exposed the vulnerability of weaker states to unilateral actions by powerful actors. Secondary sources report that African policymakers and analysts viewed the arrest as a precedent that could normalise extraterritorial interventions justified under contested legal or security claims. This concern is rooted in Africa's historical experience with external interference and selective enforcement of international norms (Adebajo, 2019; Basiru & Osunkoya, 2021). Official reactions from African actors emphasised apprehension that sovereign protections may be fragile in practice, particularly when major powers invoke domestic legal frameworks or security rationales to act beyond their borders. The African Union (AU), in its official communiqué, expressed concern over developments in Venezuela and reaffirmed the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and non-interference, underscoring that unilateral actions undermine protections relied upon by weaker states (African Union, 2026). This institutional response reflects a broader continental sensitivity to actions perceived as setting dangerous precedents for international conduct.

Diplomatic responses from individual African states, including South Africa, echoed these concerns. Statements delivered in multilateral forums emphasised that unilateral military actions weaken the rules-based international order and disproportionately endanger states with limited power to resist external coercion (Reuters, 2026). Collectively, these responses illustrate a recurring perception within the data that the Maduro incident heightened awareness of Africa's structural exposure within the global power hierarchy. A second theme emerging from the data concerns African recognition of the limitations of global legal and enforcement mechanisms in constraining powerful states. Secondary sources report that African institutions and scholars highlighted how existing international legal frameworks, while normatively robust, lack effective enforcement capacity when major powers are involved. The inability of the United Nations Security Council to take binding action against a permanent member was frequently cited as evidence of this structural weakness (Reuters, 2026; Shaw, 2017).

African diplomatic statements noted that although international law provides formal protections—such as the prohibition on the use of force and respect for sovereignty—these protections are unevenly applied in practice. As a result, African states are often compelled to rely on diplomatic protest, multilateral dialogue, and moral persuasion rather than coercive legal remedies, which remain largely inaccessible to weaker states (Basiru & Osunkoya, 2021). Scholarly analyses within the data further emphasised that institutions such as the International Court of Justice and the UN Security Council are constrained by political realities, including consent requirements and veto power, limiting their utility as enforcement mechanisms for states outside the circle of major powers (Aidonojie et al., 2026; Trahan, 2023). These observations collectively point to a recognised gap between the formal promises of international law and its practical operation in protecting African states. A third recurring theme relates to an increased emphasis on regionalism and collective diplomatic action as protective strategies. The data show that African institutional responses to the Maduro incident frequently stressed the importance of continental solidarity and coordinated diplomacy. The African Union's communiqué and subsequent statements reaffirmed the AU's commitment to collective positions on sovereignty and non-intervention, signalling that regional unity is viewed as a key mechanism for amplifying Africa's voice in global affairs (African Union, 2026). Scholarly sources also observed that the incident reinforced longstanding arguments within African political thought that individual states acting alone possess limited leverage, whereas coordinated regional positions enhance bargaining power and normative influence (Adebajo, 2019). Comparative reasoning in the data suggests that regional organisations can function as buffers against unilateral external pressure by mobilising collective diplomatic weight, even when legal enforcement tools are weak.

Discussion

The study found that the reported arrest of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro by the United States constitutes a significant challenge to established principles of international law, particularly state sovereignty, non-intervention, and head-of-state immunity. The qualitative thematic analysis revealed that the operation lacked host-state consent and United Nations Security Council authorisation, placing it in direct tension with Article 2(4) of the UN Charter and customary international law governing the use of force. The findings further show that, under prevailing international legal doctrine, sitting heads of state enjoy immunity from foreign criminal jurisdiction, and that unilateral extraterritorial arrests are not recognised as lawful enforcement mechanisms. In addition, the study found that the incident reflects

contemporary international power dynamics characterised by unilateralism and selective enforcement of legal norms. The United States' capacity to carry out the arrest with limited immediate institutional consequences illustrates how power asymmetry shapes the practical operation of international law. Finally, the findings indicate that African states, including Nigeria, perceive the incident as exposing the vulnerability of weaker states within the international system, reinforcing concerns about the limitations of global legal protection mechanisms and the importance of regional and collective diplomacy.

The findings of this study are largely consistent with existing scholarship that emphasises the tension between international law and power politics. Realist scholars have long argued that international law constrains state behaviour only when it aligns with the interests of powerful states (Mitchell, 2017; Chimni, 2017). The study's observation that the United States acted unilaterally, outside multilateral authorisation frameworks, aligns with this perspective and supports earlier analyses of Western interventions in the Global South (Joseph, 2019; Adebajo, 2014). Similarly, the study's findings on head-of-state immunity are consistent with doctrinal analyses in international law, which affirm that sitting heads of state enjoy immunity *ratione personae* under customary international law (Crawford & Brownlie, 2019; Shaw, 2017). The distinction identified in the findings between U.S. domestic legal practices and internationally recognised legal norms mirrors concerns raised by O'Connell (2019) and Ruys (2014) regarding the divergence between national enforcement doctrines and international legal standards. However, the study differs from some existing research by explicitly foregrounding African perspectives and implications. While much of the literature focuses on Latin America or great-power rivalry, this study extends the analysis to Africa, demonstrating how such incidents resonate within regions historically affected by external intervention. In this respect, the findings complement and deepen African-centred analyses of interventionism and sovereignty, such as those by Basiru and Osunkoya (2021), by linking contemporary events outside Africa to African strategic concerns. The findings signify that international law, while normatively robust, remains structurally vulnerable to power asymmetries. The Maduro arrest illustrates how legal principles such as sovereignty and immunity can be overridden in practice when dominant states prioritise strategic or security objectives. This reflects a broader phenomenon in contemporary international relations: the erosion of confidence in the universality and impartial enforcement of the rules-based international order. More broadly, the findings highlight the gap between the formal equality of states under international law and the unequal distribution of power in global politics. The incident demonstrates that legal norms alone may be insufficient to protect weaker states in the absence of effective enforcement mechanisms. For Africa, this reinforces long-standing concerns that the international system continues to operate in ways that privilege powerful actors, despite formal commitments to sovereign equality. The study situates the Maduro incident within a larger pattern of selective legality and contested multilateralism in global governance.

The implications of this research are both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, the findings reinforce realist critiques of international law by demonstrating how legal norms are mediated by power relations in practice. At the same time, they underscore the continued relevance of international legal norms as reference points for political contestation, even when enforcement is weak. Practically, the findings have significant implications for Nigeria and African states. They suggest that reliance on international law alone may be insufficient as a protective strategy against unilateral external actions. Instead, the study highlights the importance of strengthening regional institutions, such as the African Union, and pursuing collective diplomatic strategies to amplify Africa's voice in global forums. The emphasis on regionalism and solidarity identified in the findings suggests that coordinated positions may offer a more effective means of safeguarding sovereignty than isolated national responses. The study also implies the need for African states to engage more actively in global legal and institutional reform debates, particularly concerning the enforcement powers of international institutions and the veto structure of the UN Security Council. Without such reforms, the gap between legal norms and political realities is likely to persist. The results of this study can be explained by the structural characteristics of the international system. International law lacks a centralised enforcement authority, relying instead on state consent and political will. This makes its application inherently uneven, particularly when powerful states are involved. The dominance of the United States within the global political and institutional order enables it to act unilaterally with limited risk of coercive sanction, a pattern consistently identified in the literature (Shaw, 2017; Poddar, 2025). Furthermore, the institutional design of the United Nations, especially the veto power of permanent Security Council members, constrains collective responses to actions undertaken by those same members. This structural limitation explains why legal condemnation of the Maduro arrest did not translate into binding enforcement measures. Finally, Africa's interpretation of the incident is shaped by historical experience with intervention and marginalisation within global governance structures, which heightens sensitivity to precedents that appear to weaken sovereignty

protections. Taken together, these factors account for why the study's findings reflect both strong normative criticism of the arrest and limited practical consequences for the acting power. The results are therefore not anomalous but are consistent with the enduring interaction between law, power, and institutional design in the international system.

D. Conclusion

This study analyzed the arrest of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro by the United States, focusing on its implications for international law and African states, with a combined approach of legal norms and realist power politics. The key conclusion highlights that this event is not just a legal breach but an extreme example of how sovereignty, head-of-state immunity, and the prohibition of force can be violated through unilateral actions by dominant powers. Unlike previous research that discussed general sovereignty issues or Western intervention, this study underscores the unprecedented and legally sensitive nature of forcibly arresting a sitting head of state without host-state consent or UN Security Council approval. The findings also emphasize African concerns about vulnerability and the selective enforcement of international law, highlighting the limited effectiveness of global legal mechanisms. By integrating both legal and political perspectives, this research demonstrates how international law and power relations interact and contributes to debates about the rules-based international order, showing that while international law remains vital for legitimacy, its enforcement is often limited by power asymmetries.

E. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that African states strengthen regional solidarity and pursue collective diplomatic efforts to safeguard their sovereignty and enhance their influence in global governance. African countries should work towards the establishment of more robust regional legal frameworks to address unilateral actions by dominant powers and ensure that international law is enforced more equitably. Additionally, it is crucial for African leaders to advocate for reform in global institutions such as the United Nations Security Council to reduce power imbalances and ensure that international legal norms are applied fairly across all nations. Finally, further research should focus on examining how other regions can collaborate to mitigate the risks of selective enforcement of international law and address challenges arising from global power asymmetries.

F. Author Contribution Statement

This research is the result of a collaborative effort between the authors, each contributing to distinct aspects of the study. Yusuf Garba MANJO was responsible for formulating the research background, identifying the legal and political issues related to the arrest of Venezuela's President Nicolás Maduro, and coordinating the analysis of international legal norms. Ismail Shola JIMOH contributed to the design of the research methodology, including the application of realist power politics theory, and was instrumental in analyzing the implications of the event for Nigeria and African states. Both authors played critical roles in interpreting the results, particularly focusing on the intersection of international law and power dynamics. All authors contributed to the writing and editing of the manuscript, ensuring a comprehensive and systematic approach to the study. Each author played a vital role in the research process, resulting in the high-quality findings presented in this paper.

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