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THE CRISIS IN VENEZUELA

Forum: Security Council

Written by Sofia Parkinson and Anna Veselá

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INTRODUCTION

Marked by unprecedented rates of unemployment and poverty, resource shortage and brutal violence, the political and socio-economic crisis that has been unfolding in Venezuela under the presidency of Nicolás Maduro has been deemed one of the worst crises to ever strike in the Americas. The President has taken increasingly authoritarian steps in order to consolidate his power over the nation, jeopardising democracy in Venezuela, and consequently posing a threat to the international community. The refugees escaping the humanitarian crisis have been putting a strain on the neighbouring countries, who lack appropriate contingency plans for this massive refugee influx. Alarmingly, the undisrupted rise to power of militant pro-government groups set a dangerous precedent to foreign militias in the region. The current crisis has shown that criminal gangs can rise to power through politicisation whilst governments consolidate their power by turning to militias to oppress dissidents and deter protests. The nation's predicament has been recognised by the international community and, although individual member states have used diplomatic, financial and military means to aid the situation, the UN has not yet decided on a united course of action.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Chavismo

Left-wing political ideology associated with former president Hugo Chavez. It includes nationalisation and the incorporation of state-run social welfare programmes with further emphasis on a participatory democracy and a strong anti-neoliberal position on economic issues. The system also accepts private property. Critics in contrast, including Ian Bremmer and Noam Chomsky, have defined Chavismo as a state-run capitalist economy rather than a socialist state.

Bolivarian Missions

Social programmes first implemented in 1999 during Hugo Chavez's first presidential term, which later became central to both his political actions and political persona. Programmes included national corrective measures tackling housing unavailability and food insecurity and ensuring education and healthcare provision.

Nationalisation

A process in which the government takes control of private assets, such as a company or industry. It does not, however, necessarily imply social ownership under a socialist umbrella. Nationalisation has been historically carried out in both differing political and economic systems. Most commonly, it is an attempt from the government to consolidate power.

Economic Recession

A period of time when the economy contracts for two consecutive quarters. Thus, the economy is in a state of negative economic growth.

Hyperinflation

Inflation is the persistent increase in the price level of an economy over a specific period of time. Hyperinflation can be categorised as a minimum rise of fifty percent per month on the prices of goods and services in an economy.

Shortage

In economics, it is specified as a situation in which the demand for a good or service exceeds the available supply.

Authoritarianism

Within a political system, authoritarianism denotes concentrated power in the hand of a small elitist group, who lack constitutional responsibility, or a single leader. Consequently, there is a lack of consideration for the existing bodies of law in the exertion of political power. Furthermore, the creation of opposition political parties and alternative political groups, directly juxtaposed to the political leanings of the present regime, is limited or simply non-existent. Even though this system of government stands in direct contrast to democracy, some pluralism might be tolerated given the lack of a highly developed guiding ideology.

Examples of authoritarian governments include the former pro-Western military dictatorships of Brazil and Argentina and the current Egyptian regime under Abdel Fattah el-Sisi.

Rule by decree

Within a political system, rule by decree denotes the undisputed creation of laws by a small elitist group or single leader without the approval of a legislative assembly. This is commonplace in totalitarian and authoritarian regimes, including both dictatorial and non-dictatorial states.

Montevideo Mechanism

A solution proposed to the Venezuelan issue in February 2019 by the governments of the United Mexican States and the Oriental Republic of Uruguay, as well as the 14 Caricom countries and accepted as adequate by the Russian Federation, the People's Republic of China and even the Venezuelan Maduro government. It consists of four phases: the First Phase – an immediate dialogue and the generation of necessary conditions to achieve a rapprochement between the parties involved in the conflict, the Second Phase – negotiation, presentation of the results of the dialogue and a space for the flexibilisation of positions that allows to find points in common between the parties, the Third Phase – commitment and subscription to the agreements, the Fourth Phase – implementation and realisation of the agreements with the support of an international accompaniment.

GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE ISSUE

a) History

Chavista Bolivarian Revolution

Background on Hugo Chávez

Hugo Chávez's ideology first came to the forefront in 1983 with his establishment of the Bolivarian Movement-200 within the Venezuelan army, which was influenced by nineteenth century revolutionary Simon Bolivar's idea of a unified Latin America and the 1970s Peruvian military junta. He quickly became notable for his criticisms of the Venezuelan government at the Military Academy and ongoing recruitment of new members. Later in 1992, Chávez attempted a coup in conjunction with his Bolivarian Revolutionary Movement-200. Even though he was subsequently imprisoned, his brief appearance on

national television following his surrender to the Venezuelan government made him increasingly politically popular. Although the political establishment was still standing, it already showed signs of collapse, given widespread corruption and popular disapproval. Later that year, a group of air force revolutionaries allied with Chávez launched another coup attempt. It failed, but managed to spark widespread riots against the police in working class areas around the capital Caracas.

In 1994, Chávez was released from prison. Four years later, he decided to run for president on an anti-establishmentarian platform, promising to end corruption eliminate poverty and reform the political system. His populist approach resulted in widespread sympathy given the problem-filled socio-political state of Venezuela. Since 1990, the country had endured multiple recessions and increased income disparity. Chávez wins the election with the largest percentage of the popular vote seen in four decades.

Over his three presidential terms, it is important to point out Chávez's utter dependence on Venezuela's oil reserves in connection with PDVSA (Venezuelan state-owned oil and natural gas company) for the implementation of social programmes. His priority lay in redistributing the oil revenues, aiming at establishing a more egalitarian society. His wish to establish a more developed and diversified economic model is initially very successful, given the increased oil barrel prices between 1998-2008 which fuelled the Venezuelan economy and consequently Bolivarian social programmes and overall social welfare.

Constitutional reforms

In late 1999, a popular referendum, which had a drastically low voter turnout, was held which approved a new constitution. This heralded the beginning of Venezuela's fifth republic. The new constitution underlined an increase in the presidential term from five to six years, expanded presidential power, and converted the National Assembly into a one-house legislature in contrast to the previous two-house body. Most significantly, legislative tasks including citizen rights and wide-ranging social issues were transferred to the president. Restrictions on military participation in politics were also lifted, standing in direct contrast to the explicit prohibition of such under the previous constitutional model. Consequently, the military now had a government mandated role in national public order and development.

A second constitutional referendum was held in December 2007, which did not pass. Supporters of Chávez recognised the proposed changes as a constructive move towards a socialist Venezuela and some of the underlined populist proposals, which included increased social security benefits for workers, were even praised by strong critics of the government. Widespread dissatisfaction, however, was also expressed given certain proposed changes which would further authoritarian rule, with the pro-Chavista party 'Podemos' even stating that Chávez was seeking lifelong power. Problematic amendments included a proposed increase of the presidential term from six to seven years, allowing the president to declare an unlimited state of emergency, and the complete abolishment of presidential term limits. Furthermore, mass protests led primarily by university students further illustrated popular discontentment with the president's apparent authoritarian leadership. Turnout for the referendum was unexpectedly low, even in the poorest districts with the strongest Chavista presence, indicating a reluctance even from Chávez strongest supporters.

A further constitutional reform was, however, passed two years later in 2009 in which term limits for president, state governors, mayors, and National Assembly were abolished. Even though the initial proposal led to accusation of illegal and unconstitutional actions by the opposition, the Constitutional Court later ruled that such an amendment was within the realm of legality.

Bolivarian Missions

Shortly after he was elected, Hugo Chávez launched the first of his Bolivarian Missions, an anti-poverty programme called the 'Plan Bolivar 2000'. This included mass vaccinations, housing construction, food distribution, road infrastructure, and education. It was supposed to be implemented in three distinct phases, with the programme initially dependent on military involvement and progressing to further national economic self-sufficiency. Venezuelan soldiers worked in the capacity of social services, furthering the Chavista ideal of the military as an important force for national development, security, and future prosperity.

Throughout his presidency, Chávez implemented multiple other Bolivarian Missions which dealt with national themes such as education, environmental preservation, food and nutrition, healthcare, housing, and indigenous rights. Overall, the missions were praised for their effect

on contracting poverty and their increase in overall education levels and health provision in the country.

Questions, however, were raised regarding the long-term sustainability of such economic initiatives given the rate of social spending. The regime's over dependence on oil funds to fund their large populist policies led to considerable overspending, with Chávez often times going over the predicted yearly budget underlined by the Venezuelan government. Consequently, this led to a lack of national fall-back budget in case of oil price falls, ultimately leading to a significant budget deficit which caused the present humanitarian crisis following the 2014 contraction.

Concentration of power and nationalisation

In 2001 Chávez passed 49 laws aimed at redistributing land and wealth. The legislation aimed at limiting the size of landholdings, tax unused property to motivate agricultural growth, redistribute unused government-owned land to poorer families and cooperatives. Furthermore, it detailed the expropriation of uncultivated land from large private ownership for the purpose of redistribution, specifying that landowners would be compensated for the seized area at market value. Consequently, concerns grew that the President was trying to concentrate economic and political power in the state.

Following the second election of Chávez, he announces the creation of a single political party, the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV). Even though almost twenty parties support his presidency and the creation of the new political party, the three largest coalitions expressed reluctance to the the PSUV given differing political opinions amongst them. The president also announced the nationalisation of oil projects in the Orinoco Belt, which is known to be the largest petroleum reserve in the world. The refusal of international companies, most notably Exxon Mobil and ConocoPhillips to hand over control over their operations, leads them to be expropriated by the Venezuelan government.

The nationalisation of the Bank of Venezuela, formerly part of the Santander group, furthered the concentration of economic power within the country and emphasised the government growing concerns over economic instability given international connections, the need for resources whilst also serving a clear political purpose. The withdrawal from the International

Monetary Fund one year before in 2007 further illustrated Chávez prioritisation of internal political and economic affairs above international handlings for the future of Venezuela

Nicolás Maduro Presidency

Following Hugo Chávez death in 2013, his then vice-president Nicolas Maduro took office. He is later elected president, narrowly defeating the opposition candidate Henrique Capriles, who later called for a recount on the basis of fraudulent action by Maduro. Widespread outrage with the president has continued throughout his terms, starting most notably with the wave of protests known as ‘the Exit’ in 2014 which called for the ousting of Maduro.

Upon the start of his first term, Maduro was already dealing with rising inflation and shortages, with Venezuela first entering an economic recession in 2014. For the majority of his presidency, however, Maduro denied national guilt for the worsening crisis. Instead of actively implementing practical methods of combating the country’s economic crisis, he blamed international conspirators of driving the worsening conditions. The president only recognised the government’s fault in late 2018, even though he still does not recognise the extent of the present humanitarian crisis within the country.

Popular discontent was further illustrated with the opposition Democratic Unity coalition winning control of Venezuela’s National Assembly, the country’s legislative body, for the first time in 16 years in the 2015 elections. Anti-government protests sparked after a Supreme Court announcement which underlined that it would be taking over the functions of the National Assembly. The Supreme Court had consistently sided with the ruling party, leading to further outcry over the growing authoritarianism of the Maduro regime. Following international pressure, the changes were not implemented. Accusations of Nicolás Maduro as an increasingly autocratic ruler resurface after his establishment of the Constituent Assembly, which was met with strong opposition both nationally and internationally stating that the body would undermine the Venezuelan democracy.

The talks between the ruling regime and the opposition regarding the timing of the next presidential election broke down in early 2018. The government later announced that the elections would be held in the first half of the year, with the opposition parties consequently stating that they would boycott such an election. Maduro was nevertheless re-elected and

sworn in amidst allegations of vote-buying and low voter turnout, with the United States and the Lima group stating that they would not recognise the results

b) Present Situation

Economic Crisis

Inflation

The Venezuelan economy began to contract in 2014 after oil prices fell from \$112 to \$62 in six months. Given the government's dependence on the oil industry and complete lack of national savings in case of economic instability, they fell prey to the cyclical nature of the market. Consequently, the contraction led to a massive revenue shortage, resulting in the regime printing money to correct this and continue providing for the Venezuelan welfare state instead of addressing the economy's pre-existing inefficiencies and corruption of state enterprises. The rising inflation has made the national currency nearly worthless and driving the majority of the population into poverty.

National debt

At the end of 2018, Venezuela's debt was estimated to be around 140 billion USD. Given the country's reliance on oil exports, which make up 95% of their foreign earning, the falling oil prices led to a considerably lower national revenue. This escalated the degree to which the country had outstanding debt. More than 65 billion USD is due to international bondholders, while Russia and China have outstanding claims of 40 billion USD respectively. Large international companies have been granted arbitration awards. Furthermore, unpaid suppliers also hold claims.

New Bolívares

In August 2018, Maduro abolished the state-controlled exchange rate for the Bolívar and was consequently been devalued from the official rate of 250.000 to the USD to the black-market rate of 6 million to the USD. After removing five zeros from its value, the currency was replaced with the sovereign Bolívar, directly contradicting the regime's previous insistence that the black-market rate was inaccurate. This was followed by the government's admission of guilt, contradicting their previous claim that international forces were causing the economic calamity, stating that they had caused the hyperinflation by printing money to

correct massive budget deficit.

The stability of the new currency is meant to stem from it being pegged to the 'Petro', a cryptocurrency invented by the Venezuelan government that is supposedly backed by national oil reserves. There is, however, widespread scepticism of the new Bolívars given that there is little reason to think that the its link to the 'Petro' will end the expansion the money supply which is causing inflation. Since its introduction, the currency has been consistently devalued.

Social Crisis

Food and water shortage

Venezuela's dependence on importing necessary goods led to further shortages following the 2014 oil price drop. Furthermore, the enactment of price controls further reduced the distribution of basic necessities and the withholding of USD to importers considerably worsened the situation. The Venezuelan government refuses to accept international aid, including Amnesty International and the United Nations, and blames third parties for enabling the food shortages, which they claim are not as severe as stated by international organisations. Consequently, a large proportion of the population is starving, even though president Nicolás Maduro has claimed otherwise.

Healthcare and medication provision

Medical shortages, stemming from Venezuela's dependency on imports, have severely damaged the provision of medical treatment in Venezuela. The number of those suffering from preventable diseases has risen considerably, whilst both the infant and maternal mortality rates have also increased.

Mass Emigration

While Venezuelan officials claim that migration rates are normal and that neighbouring countries are providing false numbers and forging images to enable international intervention, the United Nations estimate that since June 2018 2.3 million have left Venezuela. The majority of those have remained in the region, predominantly migrating to Colombia, Brazil, Peru, and Ecuador.

Colombia has been the most affected nation, with over 1 million people having arrived since the beginning of the crises. After conflicting responses to the influx, Colombia began offering all irregular Venezuelans who registered with the RAMV (“The administrative register of Venezuelan migrants”) a temporary status for up to two years in early August 2018. The implementation of such a programme, however, have posed difficulties regarding the availability of government resources.

Brazil’s response, on the other hand, has raised concerns over the militarisation of a civil process, following a decree signed in August 2018 dispatching troops to the border. This, however, was recognised by the Brazilian government as an effort to minimise conflict between migrants and the local population following widespread unrest. The country has also made efforts to formalise the immigration process and relocate migrants from border areas, but the execution of the latter has been slow.

Recently, a unified regional response to the migration was declared following a two-day summit in Quito. A declaration was signed by eleven nations agreeing on accepting expired Venezuelan documents and calling for more international support. Both the United States and the European Union have vowed to provide financial assistance to countries dealing with the crisis to help alleviate the strain posed by an immense backlog.

Political crisis

National Constituent Assembly

In 2017, President Maduro created the National Constituent Assembly, which has the authority to change the constitution and dismiss existing officials and established governmental institutions, undermining the democratic process. This led to fears of growing recrimination and repression, with many opposition activists stating that Maduro only created the assembly to further his own power and by pass the opposition-controlled National Assembly.

Even though elections were held to choose representatives, many criticised the lack of a referendum to establish public support before convening the assembly. Furthermore, concerns were raised over the legitimacy of the assembly, given the fact that it would be made up entirely of government supporters, calling it anti-democratic. The voting procedures were

held during a constitutional crisis in which there had been widespread protests and failed negotiations between Maduro and the opposition coalition.

Following the establishment of the National Constituent Assembly, Venezuela is condemned internationally. Most notably, the US threatened to impose new sanctions as a consequence whilst multiple countries, including Argentina, Colombia, Mexico, and Peru, did not recognise the election results and the legitimacy of the organ.

2018 Election

The electoral commission, which is legally obliged to be separate from the branches of government, it said to be directly tied to the Chavista regime and consequently biased during Venezuelan elections. This was most clearly seen in the previous regional election in which the commission refused to investigate evidence of fraud. Furthermore, leading up to the election, Nicolás Maduro's regime arrested the most prominent leader of the opposition and forcing others to leave politics or go into exile. Previous elections also saw the renewal of cards which entitle individuals to receive food subsidies at the polling station. If one were to continue receiving such subsidies, it was necessary to partake in voting procedures.

Talks between Maduro's regime and the main coalition of opposition parties to establish the conditions for a fair election broke down in February. Consequently, the most prominent opposition parties have stated that they would boycott the vote which was met by international support from the Lima group, who would not recognise the election results.

Juan Guaidó

Juan Guaidó, an industrial engineer and onetime national deputy, was elected as the President of the National Assembly of Venezuela in January 2019. According to the nation's constitution, the leader of the National Assembly automatically becomes Venezuela's president in the case of a power vacuum within the country. Even though the legislative body was officially stripped of its powers in 2017, it still meets and is widely recognised as legitimate by the international community. Juan Guaidó has stated that his constitutional rights are still present and that Maduro's current presidency, which is widely seen as illegitimate by the international community due to the opposition's boycott and apparent rigging of votes, should be regarded as such an aforementioned power vacuum. Thus, Guaidó

has declared himself interim president of the Bolivarian Republic. He has called for the people's support and military backing. Juan Guaidó has been officially recognised by regional powers such as the right-wing Brazilian government, the Colombian government, Chile, and has also been endorsed by American president Donald Trump.

Guaidó called for mass protests to be held on the 23rd of January as a show of public supports for his plan to claim the presidency. Consequently, tens of thousands of Venezuelans took the streets of the capital Caracas in support of the self-proclaimed president and against the country's slide into authoritarianism and economic downfall. Furthermore, the self-proclaimed acting president announced that humanitarian aid would start to be brought into Venezuela on the 23rd of February. This date coincides with the anniversary of the ousting of military dictatorship Marcos Pérez Jiménez in 1958.

However, it is imperative that the armed forces recognise and support Guaidó for him to actually take power. This is incredibly unlikely, since withdrawing support for Maduro would represent sacrificing their current vast economic and political influence. These include, control over Venezuela's oil services, import services, and infrastructure. Furthermore, Juan Guaidó's presidency would most likely represent Senior officers in the military being held accountable for the likely human right abuses during the violent repression of the protests in the last few years.

MAJOR PARTIES INVOLVED AND THEIR VIEWS

The Maduro Government

Following in his predecessor's footsteps, Nicolás Maduro made it his main goal to maintain a position of power within the country and never admit weakness. As a result of this, the government refuses to do anything but enforce the status quo, entirely ignoring the mounting economic and humanitarian crisis that is plaguing the country. The government's conduct has also raised flags with international NGOs monitoring the freedom of speech and press. The 2018 presidential elections have been condemned as undemocratic by the United Nations, the United States, Canada and other nations, but accepted by countries such as the Russian Federation, People's Republic of China and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The

government traditionally takes a rather anti-Western stance, which is linked to its establishment. Their strongest economic and defence allies are the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation.

Popular Will Party and Juan Guaidó

Before he declared himself interim president in January 2019, Juan Guaidó was the president of the national assembly for the Popular Will Party, the main opposition to the Maduro government. During his youth, he was an anti-Chávez activist, thinking that, under his rule, the country was veering towards totalitarianism. The Vargas Tragedy of 1999 inspired him to go into politics and fight against what he thought was an ineffective and corrupt system. He was first elected into the National Assembly in 2015, and then served as the head of the opposition's legislature until December 2018, when he was named the Head of the National Assembly. Upon taking office, he swore to oppose and eventually defeat Maduro and turn Venezuela around from its economic crisis. In January of 2019, he disputed Maduro's inauguration as illegitimate due to what he believed to be fixed elections and, under Article 233 of the Venezuelan Constitution (which reads: "when the president-elect is absolutely absent before taking office, a new election shall take place [...] and until the president is elected and takes office, the interim president shall be the president of the National Assembly") and declared himself interim president until new elections could take place.

The Organisation of American States (OAS)

The OAS is a multinational organisation whose members include all American nations, with the exception of French Guiana and states such as Cuba, which have been expelled for their non-compliance with its standards. On the 27th of April 2017 Venezuela announced that it was renouncing its membership and, even though it would take two years for them to leave, they would not participate in the organisation during this time. The OAS has been one of the most vocal critics of the Maduro government, going as far as to adopt a resolution which condemned the regime for being undemocratic and wanting to take concrete steps against it (see: *Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue*).

The United States of America

During the pre-Chávez period, relations between the United States and Venezuela were strong. After 1999, however, they quickly turned antagonistic and their relationship got even

worse after it was alleged that the Bush government was behind the 2002 coup attempt which briefly deposed Chávez. In 2008, the US expelled the Venezuelan ambassador in solidarity with Bolivia and in 2014 the Venezuelan government ordered three American diplomats out of the country on the charge of promoting violence.

Following the declaration of presidency by Juan Guaidó, the US proceeded to recognise him as legitimate and Donald Trump has threatened military intervention with the aim of deposing the Maduro government. The US has also proposed a draft resolution at the UN which would recognise the Guaidó government, but it was vetoed by Russia and the PRC.

TIMELINE OF KEY EVENTS

- **December 1998** - Hugo Chávez wins the election with 56 percent of the votes
- **February 1999** - The first Bolivarian Mission, the anti-poverty programme 'Plan Bolivar 2000', is launched
- **December 1999** - A popular referendum is held which approves a new constitution.
- **November 2001** - Chávez passes 49 laws aimed at redistributing land and wealth. Concerns grown that the President is trying to concentrate economic and political power in the state
- **April 2002** - Attempted coup against Chávez
- **December 2002** - Seizure of oil company following strike
- **April 2003 to January 2012** - Further Bolivarian Missions are introduced
- **August 2004** - Recall referendum
- **January 2005** - Land reform decree
- **March 2005** - Media regulation
- **December 2005** - Opposition parties boycott election
- **December 2006** - One party under Chavismo following presidential election
- **January 2007** - New mandate passed by National Assembly enabling Chávez to rule by decree in certain areas for 18 months
- **April 2007** - Withdrawal from the International Monetary Fund
- **May 2007** - Nationalisation of oil projects in the Orinoco Belt
- **December 2007** - Constitutional referendum held. No constitutional changes are undertaken.
- **August 2008** - Nationalisation of the Bank of Venezuela
- **September 2008** - U.S Ambassador expelled and Human Rights Watch report is published

- **February 2009** - Referendum regarding the abolishment of term limits for president, state governors, National Assembly deputies, and mayors passes
- **January 2010** - Chávez devalues the bolivar
- **September 2010** - Opposition makes significant gains in the National Assembly
- **April 2012** - In order to battle against inflation, the government extends its price controls on more basic good.
- **June 2012** - Henrique Capriles Radonski becomes Chavez's opponent for the presidential election
- **July 2012** - Opposition TV channel pays fine to avoid having its assets seized.
- **October 2012** - Chavez wins a fourth term in office
- **March 2013** - Hugo Chávez dies from cancer at age 58
- **April 2013** - Nicolás Maduro, Hugo Chavez's chosen successor, wins by a narrow margin
- **September 2013** - President Maduro blames "right-wing saboteurs" for massive power cut, leaving the majority of Venezuela without electricity.
- **November 2013** - National Assembly gives Maduro emergency powers for a year, as a reaction to rising inflation. Protests erupt.
- **December 2013** - Ruling party wins local elections.
- **February-March 2014** - Student demonstrations against violent crime turn into anti-government rallies. Government accuses the opposition of planning a coup.
- **November 2014** - Oil prices reach a four-year low, resulting in public spending cuts.
- **December 2015** - Opposition coalition wins $\frac{2}{3}$ majority in parliament, which would allow them to block legislation proposed by the president.
- **January 2016** - Opposition loses $\frac{2}{3}$ majority, following the resignation of three deputies due to Supreme Court pressure
- **February 2016** - Measures aimed at fighting economic crisis, including a currency devaluation and a petrol price rise, are announced.
- **September 2016** - Massive protests calling for the removal of President
- **March 2017** - Venezuela's Supreme Court takes over the functions of the National Assembly. It is quickly revoked, yet causes massive anti-government protests to erupt.
- **April-June 2017** - Anti-government protests call for early presidential elections
- **July 2017** - An unofficial referendum, which is boycotted by the opposition, is called to approve the creation of the Constituent Assembly. After convening, it takes over crucial

legislative functions, undermining the democratic process. Venezuela is condemned internationally.

- **August 2017** - Chief prosecutor Luisa Ortega goes into exile.
- **February 2018** - Mediation talks between the government and the opposition break down, due to disagreement regarding the timing of the next presidential election.
- **May 2018** - President Maduro wins the presidential election. The domestic opposition, the United States, and the Lima Groups state that they do not recognise the results.
- **August 2018** - Venezuela renames its currency, after removing five zeros from its old currency, and pegs it to a cryptocurrency backed by the state.
- **August 2018** - The UN warns of a migration crisis.
- **November 2018** - The EU extends its sanctions on Venezuela until end of 2019
- **January 2019** - Juan Guaidó declares himself interim president of Venezuela. The United States and right-wing regional powers recognise him as the legitimate president of the country.
- **January 2019** - The United States sanctions Venezuela to prevent the state-run oil company from collecting proceeds on crude oil exports to the US.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

Maduro government tries to solve economic crisis via cryptocurrency (February 2018)

In a bid to deal with the extreme inflation that had devalued Venezuela's currency to near worthlessness, the government launched its cryptocurrency, the Petro, starting at \$60 per token. They hoped to attract investors from the Middle East and Asia, the currency being backed by Venezuela's crude oil and precious metal reserves. The Petro was mostly a failure, with no shops accepting it and almost no trace of it on the global cryptocurrency trade.

OAS Resolution on the Situation in Venezuela 05.06.2018

This resolution adopted by the OAS called attention to the alleged systematic human rights abuses in Venezuela and set out to declare the 2018 presidential election illegitimate and try and urge the Venezuelan government to increase the level of democracy in Venezuela, and allow the people to more freely express their will. This resolution was declared an attack on Venezuelan national sovereignty by its government. It is yet to be implemented in an

effective manner, only further antagonising the Maduro regime. Some argue that, in accepting this resolution, the OAS has overstepped its mandate.

UNHCR providing aid to refugees flooding into neighbouring countries, especially Colombia

An average of 5 500 people are crossing through the Venezuelan border every day (according to statistics from December 2018), with 3 million people having left so far, making it the largest exodus from a single country in the region in years. The UNHCR has been praised for its efforts to fund infrastructure and resources for the neighbouring countries, which have been taking in the brunt of these refugees.

OCHA striving to provide humanitarian relief in the country itself

UN OCHA (Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) has asked for more than \$110 million dollars for internal aid in Venezuela, hoping to increase humanitarian involvement in the country and not limit it to helping refugees in neighboring states. The UN is already helping by funding local organisations that provide medical supplies and, mainly, treatments for severe acute malnutrition. However, the Venezuelan government has been entirely unwilling to accept humanitarian help on a larger scale, claiming that it is an attempt by Western powers to exact undue influence over the state, and has gone as far as not letting UN aid convoys past the border, forcing them to set up temporary relief stations alongside it.

QUESTIONS A RESOLUTION SHOULD ANSWER

a) The issue of national sovereignty and the Responsibility to Protect

The current scope of the principle of the Responsibility to Protect (RtoP), as highlighted by Secretary General Ban Ki-moon in his 2009 report titled *Implementing the Responsibility to Protect*, and originally presented at the 2005 World Summit, includes the responsibility of nations to protect citizens of any state who may be currently suffering from, or are at risk of experiencing, any of the so-called 'atrocities crimes', specifically genocide, ethnic cleansing, crimes against humanity and war crimes. In the aforementioned report, the Secretary General also stated that: "*To try to extend it to cover other calamities, such as HIV/AIDS, climate change or the response to natural disasters, would undermine the 2005 consensus and stretch the concept beyond recognition or operational utility.*"

In May of 2019, a panel of OAS-appointed independent experts accused the Maduro government of crimes against humanity, specifically in the way of extrajudicial executions and arbitrary imprisonment of citizens. Therefore, the delegates must ask themselves: ***Does the current situation in Venezuela warrant international intervention under the Responsibility to Protect?***

- b) Should Juan Guaidó's government be recognised as legitimate by the international community?

Even though Juan Guaidó had declared himself President illegally, can his presidency be considered legitimate due to his alleged victory in the elections and proven mass public support? Should the international community as a whole support his claim to the presidency considering the probability that he is going to be more forthcoming concerning negotiations and the possibility of future UN-supervised elections? Can the recognition of his presidency by several member states be considered in violation of Venezuela's national sovereignty?

- c) Could external military intervention be effective in solving the crisis?

Donald Trump has already expressed that the US was considering military intervention in the region in order to prevent further human rights violations and bring stability and democracy to the region. ***Could this be effective? Should the international community consider an organised strike against the Maduro government as a means of deposing it?***

- d) Are economic sanctions helping or hindering the situation?

Several states have already imposed sanctions on the Maduro government, arguably worsening the economic crisis in the country, and mostly affecting the already-suffering people and not the government. ***Are there any other actions the UN Security Council can take that would be a more effective deterrent and did not negatively impact Venezuelan citizens?***

- e) Has the Venezuelan government been unfairly alienated from the international community by Western nations?

Since the Cold War (and even previous to it), nations with non-capitalist governments have been demonised within Western culture, which, some would argue, dominates international discourse and therefore dictates its conclusions. *Did this have an impact on the antagonistic way the international community is viewed by the Venezuelan government and was it reflected in their unwillingness to receive humanitarian aid?*

APENDIX

- a) IACHR Report on the Situation of Human Rights in Venezuela

Commissioned by the OAS and executed by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, this report was the basis upon which the OAS decided to adopt its Resolution on the Situation in Venezuela. It was compiled by third-party experts and details the systematic human rights abuses going on in the country under the Maduro government.

Available at: <http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/reports/pdfs/Venezuela2018-en.pdf>

- b) OHCHR Universal Periodic Review from 2016

This series of documents, including an overall report and stakeholder summaries was conducted by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights ((UN)OHCHR) details the human rights situation in Venezuela as well as a description of its political climate and standing within the international community. Even though it is slightly outdated (the next review cycle ends in 2021), it can still prove a valuable resource when assessing the atmosphere and ideology of the country (this will be especially useful to the delegate of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela)

Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/VEindex.aspx>

- c) Security Council Report on the session concerning the situation in Venezuela (S/PV.8452)

This transcript from the meeting of the Security Council from the 29th of January 2019 covers the discussion about possible solutions and outcomes of the crisis in Venezuela. Extremely useful for assessing your country's opinions on the matter, provided your country is represented in the current Security Council. It can also give the delegates an insight on

what tone Security Council meetings take and how individual member states conduct themselves.

Available at: <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/>

[%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_pv_8452.pdf](https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_pv_8452.pdf)

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

a) Modified Montevideo Mechanism

See: *Definition of Key Terms*. It has been branded ineffective by the US administration and, as demonstrated by the recent rejected Russian Security Council draft resolution, it runs a high risk of being vetoed. Experts in international politics are branding it as “doomed to fail”. However, it outlines multilateral negotiations on neutral ground that could be implemented in an alternative agreement.

b) International military intervention

After president Trump declared it possible that the US would give its backing of Guaidó’s government a military spin (however, without specifying what would prompt them to do so), voices have emerged calling for this action to be undertaken on an international level, some even calling for an UN-sanctioned military expedition led by the US. This would be completely unprecedented, seeing as, in the entire history of the organisation, UN has never supported the deposition of a sitting government. It would also be nearly impossible to gain the backing needed in the Security Council, especially because of the close ties between Venezuela and the Russian Federation and the People’s Republic of China, both veto powers

c) Specific targeted sanctions

The Security Council could call for the implementation of specific economic sanctions on Venezuela, targeting elements of its economy which are exploited by the Maduro government for their personal gain, such as oil exports. However, this would require a comprehensive framework of reform, seeing as it would be of paramount importance that these sanctions do not further the suffering of the people, as is the case with the current sanctions implemented by the US, the EU and others. Furthermore, the threat of a veto from Russia and the PRC is still present.

d) Creating an observer mission under the UNHCHR in order to monitor the state of human rights in the country

This observer mission would be created in cooperation with the Maduro government and would advise the government on how to better respect the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, functioning to a certain level as an advisory commission. This runs the risk of not accomplishing anything constructive but could be considered as the only compromise that may be reached.

e) Recognising the Guaidó government as legitimate

As was once the case with the Republic of China for a certain period of time, the UN could consider recognising the unofficial government as legitimate and then providing aid to it in its struggle for power. Seeing as this was already proposed by the United States in a Security Council session and was promptly vetoed by Russia and the PRC, it is safe to assume that the same thing would happen in this case as well, unless a careful compromise is negotiated.

CONCLUSION

The Venezuelan situation is one of the most pressing issues in the current geopolitical climate. Its people are plagued by famine, inflation and allegedly the targets of systematic human rights abuses. Considering the recent development turning the situation there into a full-fledged political crisis, it is of paramount importance that the UN Security Council comes to a compromise on the issue, and prevent further human suffering, as well as expels the possibility of a civil war.

The issues that must be considered by the delegates are:

- Creating a framework for dealing with the influx of refugees into surrounding countries, which the countries are oftentimes unable to handle
- Looking for a way the international community can contribute to the solution of the mounting political crisis, without causing unnecessary violence or further tensions
- Addressing the alleged human rights abuses in the country
- Considering the economic situation in Venezuela and being careful not to expedite

We, the chairs, hope that the delegates will enjoy a fruitful and constructive debate and that they will be able to come up with a comprehensive resolution addressing all of these issues.

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