



# Southern China International MUN

*Official Background Guide*

*Security Council (UNSC): Addressing the crisis in Venezuela in relation to its relevancy within the international community*

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## 1. Description of the Issue

### Important terms

**Referendum-** General vote by the public for any governmental actions

**Sanctions-** Commercial or financial penalties applied for self-governing state including trade barriers, tariffs, and restrictions

**Price control-** Government regulation establishing a maximum price for services or goods

**Foreign Exchange Controls-** Restrictions applied by governments to ban or limit sale or purchase of foreign countries

**PSUV-** United Socialist Party of Venezuela

**PDSVA-** Venezuela state oil company

**Democratic Unity RoundTable-** Formed in Jan 2008, unify the opposition to President Hugo Chavez

**Inflation-** General increase in prices and fall in the purchasing value of money

**Hyperinflation-** Monetary inflation occurring at a very high rate

**Constituent National Assembly (ANC)-** Convened by President Maduro in 2017 to rewrite the existing constitution.

**Chavistas-** Supporters of the socialist movement created by President Hugo Chavez

**Socialism-** Political theory that advocates for all means of production, distribution, and exchange should be owned by the community as a whole

**1999 Constitution of Venezuela-** Most recent constitution, adds two governmental branches (the citizen power and the electoral power)

## 1.1 History of the Issue

The Venezuela crisis has been one of the main issues currently being addressed in the international community as a political, economic, and human rights problems that has been continuing to increase in its severity.

In 1920, the largest oil reserves in world was discovered in Venezuela. Serving as the basis of their economy, it has contributed to the steady growth in the 1950s. When global oil prices fell in the 1980s, Venezuela's economy took the blow as their reliance on petroleum deepened.

In 1992, Hugo Chavez and a group of military officers led the rebellion in attempt the overthrow the former president at the time, Carlos Andres Perez. He was imprisoned until 1994; and began his presidential election campaign where he was able to win in 1998 with a of the 56% votes.<sup>18</sup>

When oil prices increased in 2000, Chavez received new economic funds; which he used on his populist approaches. He invested billions of the country's wealth on social programs called the Bolivarian Missions, which included free health care, education, and food, to help the condition of the poor in Venezuela. Due to these programs, poverty rates dropped from 50% to almost 31.9% in 2011. Consequently, the backlash to this was the fact that the spending was *more* than what the country could afford. According to CNBC, public spending accounted for more than 50% of Venezuela's total GDP in 2012. Chavez's reelection campaign was intensely based on the support of the poverty population of Venezuela. As Chavez continued focusing on his socialist ideologies and policies, the country became more and more dependent on oil being their main export. At the same time, his programs caused a lot of cut back on oil production, leading to massive amounts of inflation. To continue fueling his programs, Venezuela began borrowing money from different nations and in 2013, Venezuela's foreign debt reached almost 106 billion. Not to mention the 2002-2003 business strikes and coup attempts that has also caused the country to enter massive debt. Chavez had attempted to enact price controls to counter the economic recession; however, the controls were ineffective when businesses stopped making profit and decreased production.<sup>4 32</sup>

Inflation rates continued to increase every year. In 2010, when inflation rates had stopped worker's wages from increasing, the economy started to collapse. With most of Venezuela's consumer goods being imported from foreign countries along with price controls set by Chavez, it became harder and harder for citizens to obtain basic necessities, and healthcare also began to decline.

After Chavez died of cancer at the age of 58, the Vice President Nicolas Maduro was his handpicked successor. Winning the election in 2013, he had to tackle a country filled with corruption, and an economy on the verge of collapsing. In 2014-2018, there was more than 22 million accumulated inflation in Bolivar (Venezuelan currency). There has also been a series of rationing of electricity leading to a power crisis. In 2016, food imports in the country had fallen by 71 percent since 2013. Imports of medicines and medical equipment fell by 68 percent in 2013-2016. In December 2018, only 55 percent of Venezuelans ate three meals a day. In 2016, infant

deaths increased by more than 30 percent while maternal deaths rose by nearly 66 percent. In attempts to tackle the accumulating debt, President Maduro decided to implement heavy money-printing. Notably, leading to hyperinflation of their economy. <sup>6 9 21</sup>

During Chavez's ruling, he created a currency control board called the CADIVI to limit foreign currency exchange. Merchants relied more on foreign currencies since the Bolivar continued to devalue in its worth; subsequently leading to a black market currency. Maduro utilized this complex currency system, and set the official exchange rate to 1 USD to 10 VEF. Nevertheless, this rate was only used between his allies. He then gave the military total control over foods; and since the majority of goods are imported, Venezuelans had to use the black market exchange rate of 200,000 VEF to 1 USD to buy commodities. Maduro exploited the system to gain the support of the military, which has further solidified his power. <sup>32</sup>

## 1.2 Recent Developments

In 2015, the opposition Democratic Unity RoundTable won two-thirds majority and gained control over the National Assembly. While ending a 16 year socialist ruling, it also served as a threat to Maduro's reign. As a result of this, the Supreme Tribunal of Justice fired opposition lawmakers and filled it with allies of Maduro, guaranteeing Maduro's power once again. When anti-governmental protests began in 2017, Maduro announced on May 1 that he would convene the Constituent National Assembly (ANC). Constituent assemblies were created for the sake of either creating a new constitution, or editing an already existing one; in this case, the 1999 Constitution drafted by former President Chavez. Consequently, this new assembly was made up of supporters of Maduro; in other words, if the assembly were to pass, Maduro would have full power over legislating or altering any laws in Venezuela. <sup>18</sup>

The problem with the drafting of the constituent assembly lied with the lack of communication with the public. When Chavez had originally drafted the 1999 Constitution, he had called for a referendum which had allowed the public with a say. In contrast, Maduro didn't call the referendum. The opposition had boycotted the election of the assembly claiming it was "a trick to keep the ruling party in power." <sup>33</sup>

In 2018, Maduro decided to hold his reelections 4 months from his expected date, and won the reelection. However, reports showed many opposition parties intercepted from entering such elections; allowing many countries to believe this election as invalid. The leader of the opposition party, Juan Guaidó accused Maduro of being "usurper" and in January of 2019, Guaidó declared himself the new interim president of Venezuela where he used the constitution to justify his powers. <sup>11 33</sup>

In August 6, 2019, President Donald Trump announced that expansions of existing sanctions against Venezuela will be placed. The ban consists of freezing existing Venezuelan assets in US, and preventing Americans from doing business with Venezuela. Trump states in a letter to Congress, "I have determined that it is necessary to block the property of the Government of Venezuela in light of the continued usurpation of power by the illegitimate Nicolas Maduro regime, as well as the regime's human rights abuses, arbitrary arrest and detention of Venezuelan citizens, curtailment of free press, and ongoing attempts to undermine Interim

President Juan Guaidó of Venezuela and the democratically-elected Venezuelan National Assembly.” Maduro’s allies have later accused the US of creating a coup in attempts to control Venezuela’s oil reserves. <sup>33</sup>

In January 2020, during the annual election of National Assembly leaders, Juan Guaidó was intercepted and stopped from entering the building by security forces. Maduro’s allies suggest that it was a coup created by Guaidó because he knew that he was not going to win the election. The session ended with socialist lawmakers announcing the ally of Maduro, Luis Parra to be the new president. (To clarify, this election is for the President of the National Assembly, not of the country of Venezuela.) However, later that day, Guaidó’s leadership was confirmed by 100 lawmakers. The importance of this act has to deal with the fact that Maduro already has control over the electoral council, supreme court, and the military. The opposition serves as his only threat. In Chavez’s reign, he gave the military control over banks, financial service, and food. Maduro has continued to do so with his exploitation of the currency system, as mentioned above, which means if Maduro has the support of the military, he has the ultimate power. Consequently, even if Guaidó has the support of several countries, without control over the military or parliament, he doesn’t hold a significant stand power-wise. <sup>6 36</sup>

## **2. Emphasis Of The Discourse**

### **2.1 Right wing approach**

Countries such as the US have aligned themselves with the right-wing approach; seeking for a much more authoritarian solution. Countries have expressed their belief in the fact that although this is an internal problem in Venezuela, they will take necessary action if needed. In the rightist approach, individual rights will be achieved when the power of the government is minimized, compared to a leftist approach claiming that an expanded role of the government is necessary. In the case of the Venezuelan crisis, the liberties of the people of Venezuela are crucial. <sup>13</sup>

Minnesota Representative Ilhan Omar stated: “We cannot hand pick leaders for other countries on behalf of multinational corporate interests,” she said. “If we really want to support the Venezuelan people, we can lift the economic sanctions that are inflicting suffering on innocent families, making it harder for them to access food and medicines, and deepening the economic crisis.” <sup>7</sup>

### **2.2 Left wing approach**

According to the left wing liberal approach, there are two responses which can help the current situation. The first being non-Interventionism which states that the sovereignty of states should not be interfered by international countries, equivalent to national sovereignty. The idea behind this is that countries have no right to interfere with what is considered to be Venezuela’s internal affairs. Seeing as current sanctions are not improving the lives of Venezuelans, there is no justification for any intervention by countries. The second principle is self-determination, similar to non-interventionism, it explains how the citizens should be able to determine what shapes their lives. In this case, Maduro has repressed the people by not holding proper elections, and “has blocked the Venezuelan people from expressing themselves.” Both approaches offer a similar ideology of allowing the citizens of Venezuela to

have a say in what is happening, but it is important to keep in mind that as a delegate of MUN, you are not the voice of a citizen, but the voice of your country.<sup>8</sup>

## **2.3 Stance of Intergovernmental Organizations**

### **European Union (EU)**

Most EU countries such as UK, France, Germany, Finland, Belgium have expressed their support to Guaido. On the 4<sup>th</sup> of February, the EU recognized Guaido as the acting president but because of Italy's stance, this could not be made into an official position.<sup>4</sup>

### **Lima Group**

The Lima Group has expressed statements to not recognize Maduro as acting president. However, countries in the organization like Bolivia are in full support of Maduro's reign.

### **United Nations**

In January 26, there was a meeting in the Security Council in attempt to discuss the crisis, but a solution could no be reached. In February 14, 2019, UN delegates including China, Russia, and Venezuela declared to fight against the "illicit, American-led effort" to help the crisis in Venezuela. 2 draft resolutions have been voted. Alternatively, there were vetoes by Russia and China; making the resolutions ineffective.<sup>18 28</sup>

## **2.4 Stance of Developed Countries**

### **China**

China is in full support of Maduro, investing billions in projects for oil ventures. China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokeswoman Hua Chunying has stated that "China supports efforts made by the Venezuelan government and opposed foreign forces from interfering into Venezuela affairs." In 2007, China has lent Venezuela almost 62 billion dollars. According to Geng Shuang, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman, China's trade deals will not be altered despite the changes in "circumstances." On the 8<sup>th</sup> of March, China has expressed its opposition to current sanctions and supports for dialogue to be done between Venezuela's opposition and government.<sup>30 32</sup>

### **Russia**

Ever since the reign of Hugo Chavez, Russia has been an economic supporter. This stance has not changed in Maduro's reign. Russia's reign ministry stated that the freezing of assets in Washington in 2019 was illegal and amounted to "economic terror". The Russian oil company has invested in Venezuela's oil company PDVSA and has flown nuclear capable bombers to Venezuela. Russia's stance is similar to China's, noting that although trade will not be altered, the situation should be more or less stabilized.<sup>26</sup>

### **United States**

Ever since 1998, when Hugo Chavez had been elected, he was increasingly opposed to US foreign policies. Tensions worsened under Maduro's reign. The US President

Donald Trump, on several reports, has been known to be in full support and recognize Guaido. After declaring Maduro's re-election as "illegitimate" sanctions began to increase in Venezuela. Oil purchases have declined quickly, but there are still purchases happening, and US National Security Advisor John Bolton has stated that the US wants those revenues to reach Mr. Guaido. Keep in mind Russia's oil company has been subjected to US sanctions also in 2014 due to the Ukrainian crisis. USA also mentioned financially supporting Guaido, however, details have not been known. <sup>1 2 29</sup>

## 2.5 Stance of Developing Countries

Several developing countries have had a similar stance including countries such as **Iran, Turkey, and Cuba**, who all have stated to support Maduro. Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated, "Islamic Republic of Iran supports the government and people of Venezuela against any sort of foreign intervention and any illegitimate and illegal action such as attempt to make a coup d'état." <sup>11</sup>

## 3. Possible Solutions

### 3.1 In favor of Developed Countries

The stances of developed countries have been divided with a clean cut, either pro-Maduro or pro-Guaido. Considering both of the stances, the obvious solution for the crisis is either having Maduro resign or flee, seeing as the current economic and humanitarian issues can no longer be reversed, or bring the support of the military to Guaido. He had drafted a bill to incentivize soldiers to leave Maduro. Seeing as the key to Maduro's power is the military, if its support was to be in the hands of Guaido, it would inevitably cause the end of Maduro's reign. Due to amounts of sanctions being implemented by countries such as the EU and the US, necessary communications could be developed under a set of conditions to how, and to what extent actions can be done for sanctions to be lifted. <sup>21 27</sup>

In a resolution submitted by Russia on February 28, 2019 on the Security Council, the clause states, "*Urges the settlement of the current situation in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela through peaceful means, within the framework of its National Constitution, and in full respect of its sovereignty, territorial integrity and the right to self-determination of the Venezuelan people, and welcomes the calls of the Secretary General of the United Nations in this regard;*"<sup>27</sup>

### 3.2 In favor of Developing Countries

It is necessary to consider the fact that developing nations such as Iran, Turkey, and Cuba have a similar mindset on the idea that Maduro is the recognized president and actions taken by interfering parties such as the US could be considered a threat to Venezuela and their allies. Many countries, while in full support of Maduro still believe the crisis needs to be resolved within Venezuela itself. A possible solution in this situation would be for pro-Maduro countries to help and encourage further communication with the democratic forces, seeing as Maduro has stopped any communications with the opposition party. Despite the opposition pro-Maduro countries might have towards a more democratic reign, the ability for these countries to act as necessary transitioning for negotiations can be crucial. <sup>17 23 24</sup>

#### **4. Keep in mind the following**

When researching your country's positions, focus on your country's current state, military and economic capacities, along with foreign policies. Keep in mind that this issue will be addressed on an international level. Consider some of these questions:

1. To what extent can does the UNSC have power over the sovereignty of Venezuela, and who controls it?
2. If the delegation of Venezuela were to officially recognize **either Maduro or Guaido** as the official President, how can opposing countries come to an agreement?
3. To what extent will international and diplomatic relations be affected due to the difference in stances?
4. Seeing as President Maduro is refusing any negotiations with the opposing party, to what extent can countries urge open communications?
5. Assuming the political crisis is under control, how can the economic debts and issues be resolved on an international level?
6. Seeing as China, UK, USA, France, and Russia have veto powers within the security council, how can an unanimous agreement be achieved due to the opposite stances of the countries?
7. Seeing as the crisis is extremely interrelated between countries, how can countries address other countries actions or policies in a diplomatic way that doesn't promote further conflict?

#### **5. Evaluation**

As this crisis continues to escalate, more and more conundrums will bloom. As delegates of the UNSC, it is up to you to address this topic. Keep in mind that a resolution is not necessarily the ultimate key to the solving the problem, but the effective beginning step. Take into consideration the power you, as a delegate, has over the international community, but at the same time, don't be afraid to think of bold ways to solve the issue. **Note from the chair:** Although the Venezuelan issue consists of multiple issues including the social and humanitarian problems, for the sake of the debate the chair would like to focus the debate on addressing the **political** and **economic** crisis. Good luck and remember, in the end, it's the experience that matters!

A very necessary fun fact: Nicolas Maduro, aged 55, President of Venezuela, was a former bus driver.

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Feel free to ask me any questions ;)

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