

**THE EUROPEAN INTERNATIONAL  
MODEL UNITED NATIONS 2019**

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**United Nations Security Council**



**Crisis in Venezuela**

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*By Joviana Henza and Mathews Kevin Jnr*

## **Welcome letter**

Dear delegates,

First and foremost, we would like to send us our gratitude and welcome you to the TEIMUN Security Council 2019.

An endless turmoil with vague solution. The political turmoil in Venezuela continues as the Maduro regime itself would not move from the presidential seat. Every day, thousands of Venezuelan conditions exacerbated as the problem not only rise in the political area but also affecting the financial condition on its civilians This topic will bring a broad discussion on how to identify the root problem lies within the issue and how to solve it. Therefore, we hope that this council can came up with effective and practical solution to overcome the issue, which involves real actions that are possible to be implemented.

We are as excited as you are to be in the council, we expect the delegates are not only focusing on the idea to solve the issue but also to have a fun and engaging debate to take as a memorable experience.

If you have any question regarding the substantial matter on the topic, do not hesitate us to our email : [sc@teimun.org](mailto:sc@teimun.org)

Yours truly,

Joviana and Mathews  
Security Council Chairs

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## **Introduction**

### **Brief Summary**

The political turmoil which emerged in Venezuela since 2012 caused a detrimental condition for the country in many aspects; economic, institutional, political and social conditions exacerbated during this crisis. The crisis began when Hugo Chavez was the president of Venezuela and went on after **Nicolas Maduro**-an authoritative leader- who took up power and kept the same policies as his predecessor giving little or no direction in trying to solve the impending crisis<sup>1</sup>. The crisis unfolded when different problems arose in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela; these issues include a high rate of unemployment, a financial crisis, uprisings, protests, lack of basic needs such as food, clothing, health services and hygiene. This happened due to the lack of sound economic management of the country's wealth by the government<sup>2</sup>. The United Nations ("UN") and other international and regional organizations have continued to offer aid which includes food and other necessities, but the government of Venezuela has constantly declined the aid and this in itself exacerbated the Bolivarian diaspora, causing the mass emigration of Venezuelans, and the criminal rates in the country shot up significantly. Other factors that contributed to the crisis include; hunger in the country, the lack of credit in banks, political corruption, lack of local productivity and the high dependence on oil export prices<sup>3</sup>. The government hasn't been trying to mitigate or solve the issues, their main focus has been to build power in the executive branch, which led to the abrasion of human and political rights by the government and has allowed them to persecute and criminally prosecute opposition members<sup>4</sup>. The international community has offered to help end the crisis, but Venezuela has refused accepting this help because it doesn't want any external intervention in the management of its country. Currently, most of the countries in the American continent have signed the Lima Declaration (2017), which states that the Venezuela is no longer a democracy, and which condemns the violation of human rights in the country<sup>5</sup>.

The international community is greatly alarmed by the crisis and fears that it will continue to exacerbate by the day; living conditions of citizens will fall further, authoritarianism will deepen, and mass emigration will intensify. This crisis affects the national security and also other countries in the Latin American region. Since Venezuela has the largest oil reserves in the world, other foreign powers are keen on

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<sup>1</sup> Venezuela profile - Timeline (BBC) - <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-19652436>

<sup>2</sup> Venezuela Crisis (Council on Foreign Relations) - <https://www.cfr.org/background/venezuela-crisis>

<sup>3</sup> Argentina and five other countries abandon Unasur (La Nacion)

<sup>4</sup> Venezuela's worst economic crisis - <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/05/venezuela-worst-economiccrisis-wrong-170501063130120.html>

<sup>5</sup> Venezuela, Events of 2016 (Human Rights Watch) - <https://www.hrw.org/worldreport/2017/country-chapters/venezuela>

exploiting the crisis. For the benefit of Venezuela and the whole international community, a solution to this crisis should be reached before it continues to deepen<sup>6</sup>

## **Definition of Key Terms**

**Economic sanctions** - The withdrawal of customary trade and financial relations with a specific country, often to force a certain political, economic or social change on the recipient.

**Migrant** - Person who moves from one place to another, usually looking for better living conditions and opportunities. Depending on the case, migrants may or may not have legal authorization to enter or reside in a country. Often, the situation of migrants can be that of vulnerability.

**Bolivarian Diaspora** - Migratory movement in the Americas stemming from the voluntary emigration of millions of Venezuelans from their country during the governments of Hugo Chavez and Nicolás Maduro. It is the largest recorded refugee crisis in the Americas to date. Around 2 million people have left the country since the massive emigration began.

**Inflation** - A sustained increase in the prices of goods and services over months or years, as measured by indexes like the Consumer Price Index. This leads to a decrease in the purchasing power of the currency of the country. High inflation rates have a very negative impact on the economy, harming disadvantaged individuals the most. An excessively high rate of inflation is described as **hyperinflation**.

**Default** - When a country is unwilling or unable to meet the obligations of a loan agreement, it declares it is in default, meaning that it will cease to pay off its national debt. This lowers trust in the country by investors, making it harder to borrow money in the future. A default may be ended by negotiating an arrangement with creditors.

**P.D.V.S.A.** - State-owned oil and natural gas extraction, refining and commercialization company. Founded in 1976 after the oil industry was nationalized. PDVSA is crucial for the Venezuelan economy.

**P.S.U.V. (United Socialist Party of Venezuela)** - Socialist political party in Venezuela resulting from the fusion of the political parties which supported Hugo Chavez's Bolivarian Revolution. It is a leftist party that follows Chavist ideas and holds him as a very important icon. Its current leader is Nicolás Maduro.

**Organization of American States (OAS)** - International organization founded in 1948 and composed of the 35 independent states of the Americas, whose main aim is improving continental cooperation and integration in economic, political and other issues. The organization has the self-declared mission of defending democracy and Human Rights in the region.

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<sup>6</sup> Venezuela must uphold rights (UN News) <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/03/1033852>

**Political prisoner** - Person who is imprisoned because his/her actions or beliefs are contrary to those of his/her government. Often, political leaders or protesters become political prisoners in authoritarian governments.

**Chavismo** - Political ideology established by Hugo Chavez that includes socialist ideas, left-wing populism, Bolivarian elements, patriotism and Latin American integration as its main components. Chavez implemented a "Bolivarian revolution" in 1999 in Venezuela following the guidelines of this ideology.

**Lima group** - Multilateral body established after the signing of the Lima Declaration in 1975 formed by 17 American countries seeking a peaceful resolution to the crisis in Venezuela. The Group supports the National Assembly and considers that democracy in Venezuela no longer exists <sup>7</sup>.

## **History**

Venezuela, officially known as the Venezuela, is a federal republic located on the northern coast of South America with Caracas being its capital city. Spanish colonization began on the northeast coast in 1521 and ended in 1810, with Venezuela declaring its independence from Spain. Until 1958, Venezuela was under military rule. Consequently, Venezuela was a country with a democratic government, with Hugo Chavez as President, who was elected in 1998 and took the office in February 1999. Hugo Chavez led the country from 1998 until 2013 when he died at the age 58 after a battle with cancer. His government was marked by a socialist ideology that became known as Chavismo, where he termed his presidency as "'Bolivarian' Revolution", named after Simón Bolívar. He got re-elected in 2000 under a new constitution he devised, also winning for a third time in 2006.<sup>8</sup> Chavez also was always in close relation with Fidel Castro. The relationship with Castro began in the late 1960s, when the Cuban dictator send arms and men to help the Partido de la Revolution zolana (PRV, Party for the Venezuelan Revolution), led by Douglas Adán Chavez, Hugo's oldest brother and the current minister of education, who was a leading member of this group, which sought to infiltrate the Venezuelan army and take it over. Hugo Chavez had the same goal. In 1982, Chavez' comrades-in-arms made a solemn promise to "break the chains, free the people".<sup>9</sup> Since December 1998 there were seven elections of different kinds in Venezuela, each of them won by Chavez and his supporters. The breakdown of the vote remained, suspiciously, nearly invariable: 60 percent for Chavists (Chavez's side) and 40 percent for the opposition. The rate of abstention from voting always exceeded 50 percent, with two exceptions: The National Assembly elections in December 2005, in which 83 percent stayed away from the polls, and the presidential election of 2006, when 25 percent were reported

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<sup>7</sup> Declaracion de Lima (Gobierno Argentino) – <https://www.mrecic.gov.ar/declaracion-de-lima-0>

<sup>8</sup> Paulina Gamus, "Venezuela: National Affairs", The American Jewish Yearbook, Vol. 107 (2007), pp. 308-323, (American Jewish Committee), p. 308

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

as not voting<sup>10</sup>. Suspicions of voting fraud were especially widespread after the defeat, under murky circumstances, of a recall referendum in August 2004 that sought the president's ousting. Surveys done after the referendum found that roughly 80 percent of Venezuelans, including a good number of the president's backers, did not think the vote was conducted fairly. If anyone still harbored doubts that the right to secret ballot was violated, Luis Tascón, a Chavist representative in the National Assembly, provided, on his Website, a list of people who voted for recall. Many of them were subsequently fired from government jobs, and those who worked in the private sector suddenly suffered the termination of their business contracts with public bodies. Later, the government opened a Webpage for those who wanted to ask for forgiveness because they had voted for the recall of Chávez.<sup>11</sup>

After his death in April 2013, Nicolas Maduro, Hugo Chavez's chosen successor, was elected president by a narrow margin, illustrating the lack of extensive support that Maduro would have liked to have received. Venezuelan citizens enjoyed prosperity for much of the 20th century financed by oil wealth. Between 1940 and 1948, Venezuela's per-capita GDP grew at 6.8 percent per year. In the 1960s and the 1970s, the government in Venezuela spent large amounts of money on social programs which allowed them to keep the citizens content<sup>12</sup>. Venezuelan workers were known for enjoying the highest wages in Latin America. However, the situation in Venezuela dramatically changed when oil prices collapsed during the 1980s. The economy contracted, and inflation levels rose, remaining between 6 and 12 percent from 1982 to 1986. The inflation rate surged to 81 percent in 1989. Venezuela's GDP contracted by -8.3 percent in 1989. At the same time, wages stagnated, and unemployment was high. By the mid-1990s, Venezuela saw annual inflation rates of 50 - 60 percent, and an inflation rate of 100 percent in 1996. The country also suffered a severe banking crisis. When Chavez first took office as president in 1999, almost half the population was below the country's poverty line<sup>1314</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> "A Brief History of Venezuela", Studycountry, <https://www.studycountry.com/guide/VE-history.htm>

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, pg. 310

<sup>12</sup> Al Jazeera "Venezuela's Worst Economic Crisis: What Went Wrong?" Business & Economy, Al Jazeera, <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/20166/04/venezuela-worst-economic-crisis-wrong-170501063130120.html>

<sup>13</sup> How a rich country collapsed (CNN)-  
<http://money.cnn.com/2017/07/26/news/economy/venezuela-economiccrisis/index.html>

<sup>14</sup> Timeline: Venezuela's tumultuous history (Al Jazeera)

<https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2012/09/201292121430533264.html>



Figure 1: Political Map of Venezuela

Source: States Map with Cities: Venezuela, <http://libertaddeeleccion.org/political-map-of-venezuela/>

Chavez' first attempt to get to power through a coup in 1992 failed. Six years later, he was elected president. He ran on a leftist, socialist platform, with a marked populist tone, an anti-imperialist and anti-US rhetoric, and promised to end poverty and bring social justice to the forgotten lower classes. Chavez's first years in power began to show his attitude towards government. He implemented laws to redistribute wealth and benefit small farmers. He used the revenues from oil exports to carry forward programs that would alleviate poverty. At the same time, he nationalized many crucial industries, most importantly the oil industry, which gave him greater control over the economy. In spite of some failures, like his defeat in the 2007 referendum, Chavez was able to progressively accumulate power in the government and in his own hands. He started restricting the free press and installed a strong propaganda apparatus. In 2009, he succeeded in eliminating term limits for presidencies. Human Rights Watch accused his government of having a poor record regarding human rights<sup>1516</sup>.

By 2013, social divisions were growing, institutions were weaker, and the international context promised problems as oil prices drop. In that scenario, Chavez died of cancer. His successor, Nicolás Maduro, had to face the crisis that had been building up over the last years. Maduro's government had to manage an economy which was largely based on oil in an international context of falling oil prices. Moreover, the country's reserves were dwindling, and it started accumulating debt. Maduro had to try to manage a government that had large fiscal deficit while

<sup>15</sup> Gobierno de Hugo Chavez (La Nación)- <https://www.lanacion.com.ar/2083058-pdvsa-la-joya-de-la-corona-chavista-que-ahora-languidece>

<sup>16</sup> UN Human rights Council confronts Venezuela (Human Rights Watch)

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2017.10/02/un-human-rights-council-confronts-venezuela>

maintaining the social policies that sustained support. This combination ended up leading to incredibly high inflation (in the order of 10.000% a year) coupled with unemployment, economic recession and scarcity of basic goods. Maduro made attempts at devaluations, price controls, austerity programs and even the launching of a cryptocurrency, but problems persisted. The fact that the US imposed economic sanctions on 11<sup>th</sup> Dec 2014 made the situation worse. The ongoing economic crisis clearly had social and political repercussions. Although a loyal base kept on supporting Maduro, more people started siding with the opposition, clearly angry at the economic failures of Maduro's government. That is how protest movements rose and the opposition managed to win legislative elections. Maduro showed that he was not willing to give up power by bypassing the National Assembly, controlled by the opposition, with a newly formed constitutional assembly. The institutional deterioration in Venezuela led to many Latin American countries to declare that democracy was effectively non-existent in the country. Moreover, the fact that there were no institutional channels to debate resolutions to the crisis, made the situation worse and created an obstacle to any agreement.<sup>17</sup>.

Currently, Venezuela is in complete chaos and crisis. Food shortages have become severe. Venezuelans have endured weeks, in some cases months, without basics such as milk, eggs, flour, soap and toilet paper. When there is food on the shelves, prices are so high that few Venezuelans can afford it. Many have taken to eating out of the trash. Medicine remains in short supply, too. Venezuelans hunt for penicillin and other remedies at pharmacies everywhere, often without success. Public hospitals have fallen apart, causing people, including infants, to die because of the scarcity of basic medical care. Venezuela recently asked the United Nations for help to relieve serious shortages of medicines. The country is spiraling further into a humanitarian disaster spurred by the government's economic policies, which have caused the currency, the bolivar, to plunge in value and prices to skyrocket. By 2017, the bolivar had lost 96% of its value. As of Jan 2018, it took 248,521 bolivars to buy an American dollar<sup>18</sup>.

Maduro's main actions recently have been attempting to postpone the next election. While the opposition party is growing, Maduro's support is dwindling. Presidential elections were held in Venezuela on 20 May 2018, with incumbent Nicolás Maduro being re-elected for a second six-year term. Considered a snap election, the original electoral date was scheduled for December 2018 but was subsequently pulled ahead to 22 April before being pushed back to 20 May<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup> Gobierno de Hugo Chavez (La Nación)-  
<https://www.lanacion.com.ar/2083058-pdvs-la-joya-de-la-corona-chavista-que-ahora-languidece>

<sup>18</sup> The crisis next door (The Washington Post)

<sup>19</sup> Venezuela opposition will boycott the election (New York Times) -  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/21/world/americas/venezuela-election-opposition-boycott.html>

## Discussion of the Problem

### Humanitarian Crisis

#### Poverty<sup>20</sup>

Due to the serious shortage of medical supplies, it is extremely difficult for Venezuelans to obtain essential health care. Surveys in local public hospitals of Venezuela indicate that there is a serious shortage of basic drugs in 76% of the hospitals surveyed.

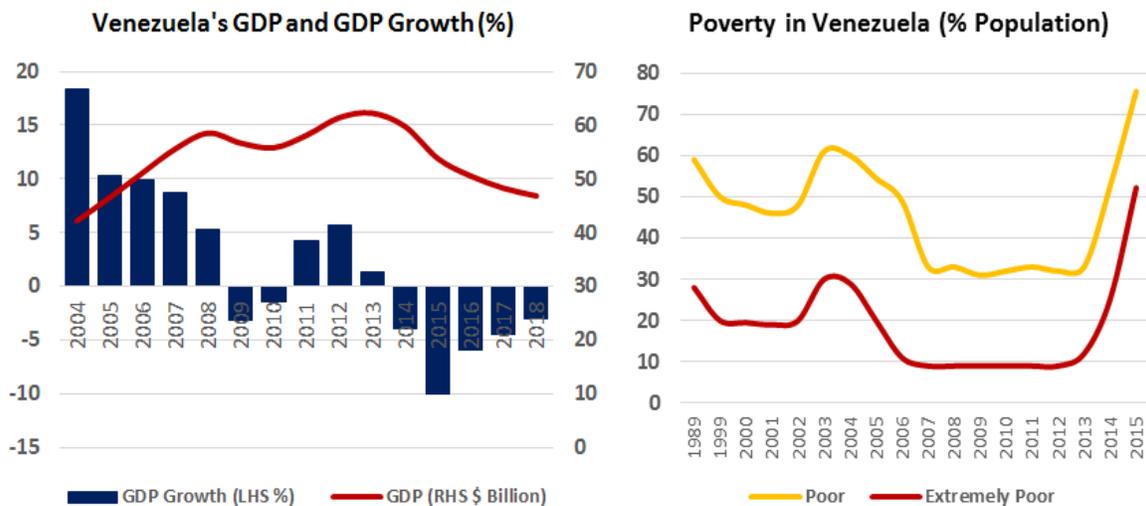


Figure 2: GDP & Poverty Levels in Venezuela.

Source: Science Files: Poverty in Venezuela, <https://sciencefiles.org/poverty-venezuela/>

As a result, mortality rates have increased because of the decline of proper healthcare. The severe shortage of food is an obstacle for many people to have adequate nutrition. In a survey carried it was determined that 87% of low-income households have difficulties in buying food. Today, almost 90% of the population is below the poverty line. The Venezuelan government has played down the severity of the crisis. Its own actions to reduce the shortage have not had positive results, and the government refuses to receive international aid.<sup>21</sup>

As a result of the worsening living and political conditions in the country, many Venezuelans have chosen to leave their country seeking a better future. In the past, Venezuela had been known for receiving migrants and refugees from around the world, but now the situation has reversed, and the emigration mounts to around 2

<sup>20</sup> Humanitarian crisis in Venezuela (Amnesty International) [http://www.el-nacional.com/noticias/mundo/amnistia-Internatinal-crisis-humanitarian-venezuela-acecha-sumamerica\\_230757](http://www.el-nacional.com/noticias/mundo/amnistia-Internatinal-crisis-humanitarian-venezuela-acecha-sumamerica_230757)

<sup>21</sup> Food Shortages in Venezuela (the Guardian)- <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jan/21/venezuela-looting-violence-foodshortages>

million people leaving<sup>22</sup>. Migrants tend to relocate in Miami, Spain or other Latin American countries, like Colombia, Chile, Argentina and Brazil. As the crisis worsens, the outwards flow intensifies, and Colombia and Brazil start experiencing problems to accommodate the growing number of people entering through their borders<sup>23</sup>. This massive emigration signals that a large portion of the population has lost hopes that the country will recover in the short term. The loss of a skilled workforce is a problem that intensifies the crisis and will make recovery efforts harder in the future<sup>24</sup>.

## **Economic Crisis**

### **Failed Economic Management**

Venezuela's large economic problems have fueled the political and civil unrest, resulting in mass protests and rioting. The economic crisis was and is the root cause of the now dire situation that exists in Venezuela. The economy must be addressed in order to restore peace and prosperity to a now desperate nation. Under Hugo Chavez, the state-owned petroleum companies provided billions of dollars to social programs and food subsidies 2526. The economic leg of the crisis first began when oil plummeted from over \$100 a barrel in 2008 to around \$50 today. This meant that the subsidies and welfare programs that had long propped up an inept and inefficient economy were gone, leading to massive unemployment and shortages of even the most basic commodities. Since Venezuela is an export economy, meaning it makes much of its money by selling goods to other countries, much of the government's funding was in foreign currency. With less oil to sell abroad, there is less relatively stronger foreign currency to take in. This makes it much harder to import basic goods like medicine and food. Imports have fallen by 50%, which has led to a crisis in the healthcare system. Clothes, technology and even toilet paper are imported, and are now in desperately short supply. Food shortages have meant that over the past year 74% of Venezuelans lost on average 19 pounds. The Venezuelan GDP has decreased by 10% and will be a quarter

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<sup>22</sup> UNHCR issues new protection guidance -

<http://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2018/3/5aa793c14/venezuelans-flee-throughoutlatin-america-unhcr-issues-new-protection-guidance.html>

<sup>23</sup> International migration (UNESCO)- <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-humansciences/themes/international-migration/glossary/migrant/>

<sup>24</sup> Guidance note on the outflow of Venezuelans (UNHCR) -

<http://www.refworld.org/docid/5a9ff3cc4.html>

<sup>25</sup> Nicolás Copernicico, Biography of Hugo Chavez (Biografías y Vidas), 2014 -

[https://www.biografiasyvidas.com/biografia/c/chavez\\_hugo.htm](https://www.biografiasyvidas.com/biografia/c/chavez_hugo.htm)

<sup>26</sup> Nicolás Copernicico, Gobierno de Hugo Chavez (La Nación) 2016 -

<https://www.lanacion.com.ar/2083058-pdvs-la-joya-de-la-corona-chavista-que-ahora-languidece>

smaller than its 2013 self by the end of the year 2017<sup>27</sup>.

## The changing Venezuelan diet

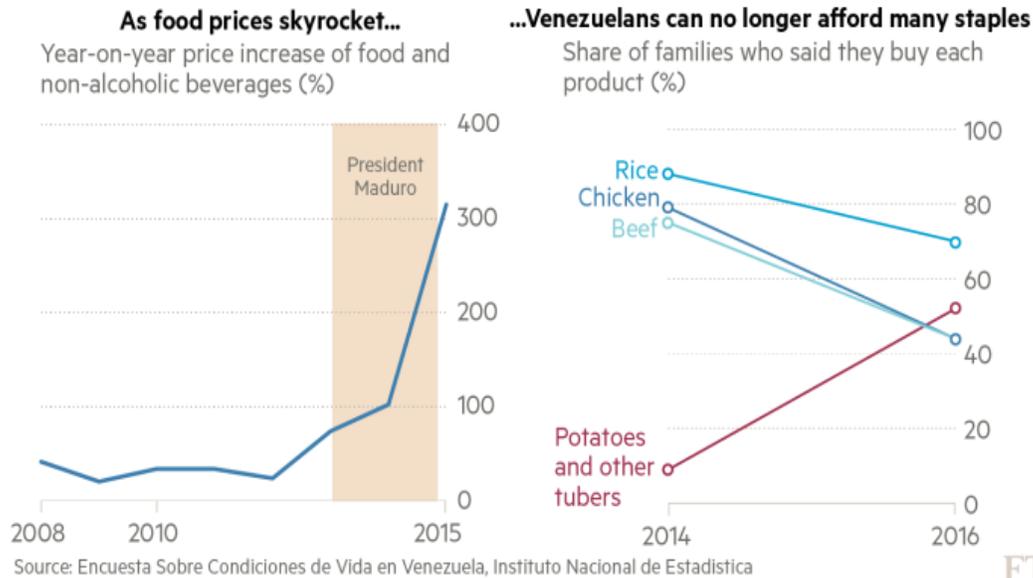


Figure 3: Rise in Food prices in Venezuela

Source: Cryptocurrency, Venezuela, and the International Order, <https://blog.blockonomics.co/cryptocurrency-venezuela-and-the-international-order-3b6b317296e2>

## Inflation and Corruption

The situation is made worse by inflation that has exceeded 1600% in just the past year. The Venezuelan government has tried to curb soaring prices by inserting price controls, but this decision has only increased underground economic activity and led to the disappearance of the supply of many goods completely<sup>28</sup>. President Maduro made two crucial decisions regarding the government's finances. First, he refused to cut the government budget. Second, he refused to widen the tax base or raise taxes. This caused the deficit to skyrocket, leading to Venezuela printing massive amounts of money to fund the now unfunded programs. Fearing the political ramifications of cutting the budget or raising taxes, increased printing has led to mass inflation<sup>29</sup>.

Compared to other countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, Venezuela is highly dependent on food imports to meet its food consumption needs and is a net importer<sup>30</sup>. The discovery of oil and the conversion to a petrol-economy caused an

<sup>27</sup> Why more sanctions don't help Venezuela (Foreign Policy) -

<http://foreignpolicy.com/2018/01/12/why-more-sanctions-wont-help-venezuela>

<sup>28</sup> Inflation (Business dictionary)-

<http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/inflation.html>

<sup>29</sup> Freedom in the World 2018: Venezuela, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2018/venezuela>

<sup>30</sup> Patrick Clark, Sowing the Oil? The Chavez Government's Policy Framework for an Alternative Food System in Venezuela.

influx of foreign exchange into the country, making food imports cheaper than domestic production and a resultant massive rural exodus and urbanization. Economists refer to this phenomenon as Dutch Disease and it has shaped Venezuelan politics and society profoundly to this day (CEPR 2009:21; Wilpert 2007). Today, Venezuela is one of the most urbanized countries in Latin America with just 12 % of the population residing in rural areas (Wilpert 2006; Ellner 2008). As a result of the declining demand for domestic agricultural goods due to Dutch Disease, Venezuelans from the countryside flooded into the country's urban centers in search of work, eventually settling there permanently. Caracas, the country's capital, was a small city surrounded by mountains at the beginning of the century and today, towering above the city are dizzying mountain cerros or mountainside slum neighborhoods engulfing the city.<sup>31</sup>

### **Failed Diversification**

Venezuela never took the time to develop the non-energy sectors of its economy. Most oil dependent countries build up reserves while prices are high to provide security when prices are low. Venezuela's rampant government spending during times of prosperity left little money for these emergency fund coffers<sup>32</sup>. Chavez and his party claimed that Venezuela suffered during the oil bust from 1979 to 1999 because capitalists stole from the people and hoarded wealth. Maduro is telling a similar story today. To combat the inequality, Chavez set the precedent of setting right this supposed wrong by increasing public spending and expanding subsidy programs. These programs were paid for by seizing properties and assets from political enemies and the opposition. By crippling businesses and businessmen and rewarding less efficient competition with subsidies, private firms fled the country. The exodus of private firms meant when oil prices finally fell, as they have, there was no other efficient industry to prop up the economy or provide for the country. Venezuela's farming reserves have already emptied despite a record harvest recorded in 2018. It was not popular politically to think of the long term, and so Venezuela's artificial economy was not prepared for its fall<sup>33</sup>.

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<sup>31</sup> Patrick Clark, 'Sowing the Oil? The Chavez Government's Policy Framework for an Alternative Food System in Venezuela', Vol. 33, No. 1/2, Eating Right Now: Tasting Alternative Food Systems (2010), P. 137

<sup>32</sup> Venezuela's worst economic crisis - <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/05/venezuela-worst-economiccrisis-wrong-170501063130120.html>

<sup>33</sup> Biography of Hugo Chavez (Biografías y Vidas) - [https://www.biografiasyvidas.com/biografia/c/chavez\\_hugo.htm](https://www.biografiasyvidas.com/biografia/c/chavez_hugo.htm)

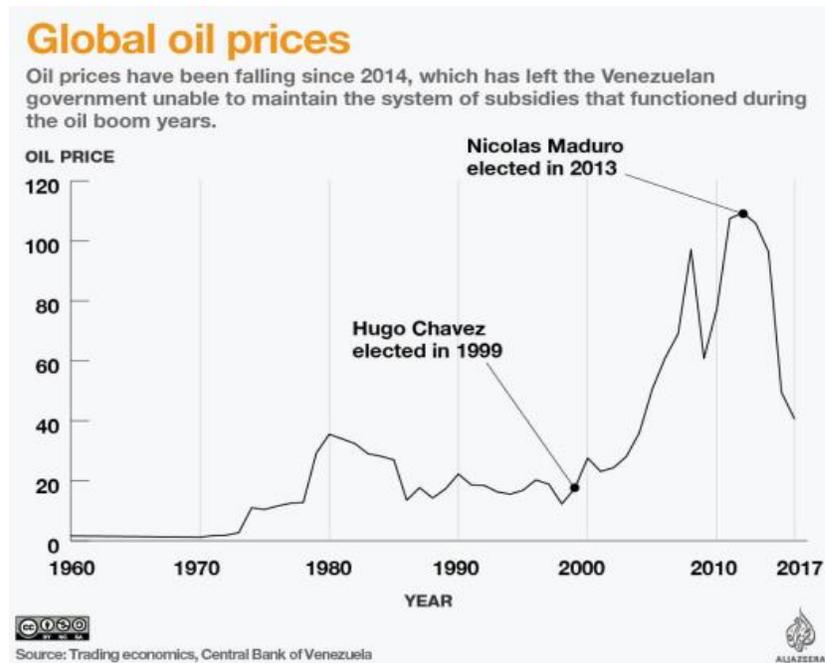


Figure 4: Global Oil Prices

Source: *Venezuela Before The Global Economy: Foreign Position, Profitability And Development*, <https://anthropologikarl.blog/2019/01/28/venezuela-ante-la-economia-global-posicion-exterior-rentabilidad-y-desarrollo/>

Corruption is another issue that has propelled the economic recession. Officials have embezzled billions of dollars, earning Venezuela the title of the most corrupt country in Latin America, a tough title to win. Venezuela has always had a problem with corruption. In 1824, Simon Bolivar established the death penalty for "all public officers guilty of stealing 10 pesos or more". In 1875, Venezuelan finance ministers said that "Venezuela does not know to whom it owes money and how much," and a century later, the General Comptroller called the same financial system "totally out of control"<sup>34</sup>. With high oil prices in the 1970s, the government found itself with immense wealth. They poured money into 300 non-profitable state-owned companies with insufficient oversight and regulation enforcement, allowing corruption to flourish. Before this, only the top officials of Venezuela could steal from the country with impunity. Now, with more departments and state-enterprises than ever, public funds could be abused at every level. A Venezuelan university recorded that 36 billion dollars were embezzled and stolen through corrupt government programs during the Lusinchi administration from 1984-1994. In 1997, an NGO estimated that over 100 billion dollars of government money was either stolen or mismanaged since the 1970s. Venezuela continued these malpractices under the Chavez Administration<sup>35</sup>. While billions of dollars are missing from collected taxes, it is difficult to calculate an

<sup>34</sup> Venezuela Country Profile (CIA World Fact-book) -

<https://www.cia.gov/library/Publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ve.html>

<sup>35</sup> Gobierno de Hugo Chavez (La Nación)- <https://www.lanacion.com.ar/2083058-pdvsa-la-joya-de-la-corona-chavista-que-ahora-languidece>

exact figure because Venezuela rarely discloses its public financial records to scrutiny<sup>36</sup>.

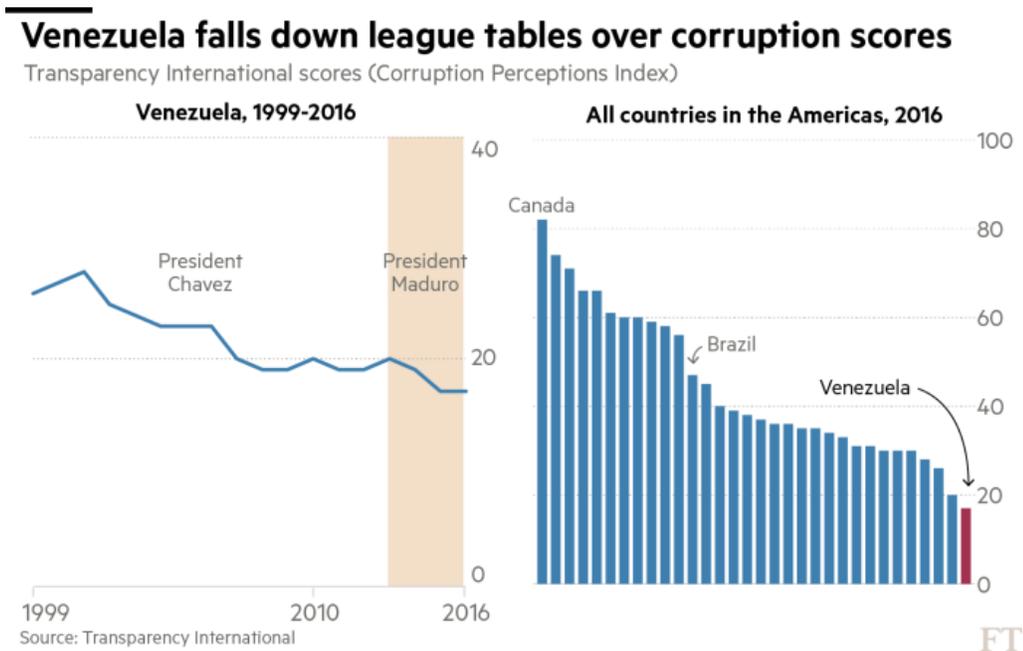


Figure 5: Corruption levels in Venezuela

Source: Venezuela in Charts, <http://www.ronpaulforums.com/showthread.php?530872-Venezuela-In-Charts>

This lack of transparency has not covered up the half of 22 billion-dollar transfers during Chavez’s presidency that are unaccounted for in foreign accounts. Chavez’s administration was corrupted because of his corruption directly, his policies to ensure loyalty and his “mediocre management team working without transparency or accountability”. Anyone who tried to expose Chavez’s corruption was jailed or silenced. The government wasted billions on providing free oil transfers to Cuba, buying weapons, and propping up failing businesses, and its officials, around 1,500 party elites, have stolen 95 billion dollars under Chavez’s watch. Corruption has not slowed down since Chavez’s death<sup>37</sup>. While Maduro may claim to be tough on corruption, it is not clear what arrests are for justice and what are for consolidating power and jailing political and economic opponents. Luisa Ortega, who was the former chief prosecutor in Venezuela was fired and then fled for her life after she accused the President and other government officials of corruption. After her declaration, an arrest warrant was put out for her husband on charges of extortion.

<sup>36</sup> Venezuela’s worst economic crisis - <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/05/venezuela-worst-economiccrisis-wrong-170501063130120.html>

<sup>37</sup> Biography of Hugo Chavez (Biografías y Vidas)- [https://www.biografiasyvidas.com/biografia/c/chavez\\_hugo.htm](https://www.biografiasyvidas.com/biografia/c/chavez_hugo.htm)

This issue of corruption must be addressed, or else Venezuela cannot hope to progress into a modern, stable, and transparent economy<sup>38</sup>.

## **Political Instability**

### **1999-2013: Hugo Chavez' regime**

Hugo Chávez was a former military officer of notable reputation who rose to prominence in a failed military coup in 1992. Later in 1998, he was elected as the president of Venezuela. His promises as a presidential candidate included fighting poverty and fighting social disparity by putting the nation's oil resources to the right use. Once in power, Chávez replaced the existing Congress by creating a new National Assembly, which he controlled. He used his new National Assembly to rewrite the constitution to keep himself in power. The presidential periods were originally five-year terms without the possibility of immediate reelection. Former presidents could run again only after two terms had passed. The National Assembly changed it to six-year terms, with unlimited reelections, and extended these new parameters to governors and other elected officials<sup>39</sup>. Chavez was fortunate in that oil prices rebounded under his tenure, bringing in much needed revenue to the country. Chavez spent the money that came to him implementing his socialist policies which came to be called Chavismo. From 2000 to 2013, spending as a share of GDP rose from 28% to 40%, a much bigger rise than in Latin America's other large economies<sup>40</sup>.

Chávez increased public spending on social programs, expanded subsidies for food and energy, and enacted price controls. Venezuelans felt the results, in higher incomes and improved standards of living. Under his rule, Venezuela's unemployment rate halved, income per capita more than doubled, the poverty rate fell by more than half, education improved, and infant mortality rates declined. Chavez was seen as a national hero and was loved by the country's poor and working classes. He aligned himself with the Marxist governments of countries like Cuba. However, a country cannot succeed purely based on handouts. In order to maintain these standards of living, it is necessary to have a strong economy. Chavez did not support the development of a strong private sector. He attacked private firms, which left the country short of expertise and money to develop these resources. He expropriated oil assets, factories, and property. Nobody wanted to

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<sup>38</sup> Venezuela must uphold rights (UN News)-  
<https://news.un.org/en/story/2015/11/515332-venezuela-must-uphold-rights-eventhose-who-disagree-state-policies-un-human>

<sup>39</sup> Constitution of Venezuela - <https://venezuelanalysis.com/constitution>

<sup>40</sup> Rebecca M. Nelson, Venezuela's Economic Crisis: Issues for Congress, p.2,  
<https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R45072.pdf>

do business there anymore. These poor economic moves undercut the wealth of oil that funded these government programs<sup>41</sup>.

In 2000, Venezuela had enough reserves to cover more than seven months of imports; that dropped to under three months by 2013. In December 2012, Hugo Chavez appointed Nicolas Maduro as his vice president. Chavez had already won his next election, but was headed into his 4th cancer surgery, and he intended for Maduro to take over should he not survive. During Chavez' recovery period, Vice-president Maduro took over as interim president. When Chavez was not healthy enough to return for his inauguration, a special election was held, which Maduro won, and he became the president on April 13, 2013. Chavez died from cancer on March 5th, 2013<sup>42</sup>. This anomalous situation lasted just two months: Chávez died on March 5, without becoming president. Vice President Maduro was in charge of the executive on an interim basis, until the holding of new elections.

### **2013-present: Nicholas Maduro's regime**

Maduro, who had served under Chavez as Minister of Foreign Affairs from 2006 to 2013 and as his Vice President from 2012 to 2013, won the presidential election and is now running the country. Throughout Maduro's presidency, the economic situation in Venezuela has not changed: high rates of inflation, unemployment, and criminal activities continue to harm the country at its core. The black market is constantly rising and exactly because of that the shortage of food and energy has worsened. The government's efforts to manage the shortages have included moving clocks forward half an hour, closing schools on Fridays, and sending civil servants home three days a week. The state has tried to ration basic foodstuffs as well as set their prices, but the consequence is that they have simply disappeared from the shops into the black market. Nicolas Maduro inherited a country with an unstable economy and has up until now done nothing effective to tackle the problem. His few actions include printing money, which fueled more inflation. He is running through the country's gold reserves to pay its international debt service and to finance at least some basic imports, but those reserves are now dwindling, and Maduro will either have to default or stop importing food<sup>43</sup>. Recently, in January 2017, he announced a 50% hike in the minimum wage and pensions - the fifth increase over the last year, to help shield workers from the world's highest inflation rate. The core of the problem, though, is not being addressed, and the economic crisis continues to torment Venezuela's society<sup>44</sup>.

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<sup>41</sup> PDVSA, the jewel in the Chavista crown that now languishes-  
<https://www.lanacion.com.ar/el-mundo/pdvs-la-joya-de-la-corona-chavista-que-ahora-languidece-nid2083058>

<sup>42</sup> Biography of Hugo Chavez (Biografías y Vidas)-  
[https://www.biografiasyvidas.com/biografia/c/chavez\\_hugo.htm](https://www.biografiasyvidas.com/biografia/c/chavez_hugo.htm)

<sup>43</sup> Food Shortages in Venezuela (the Guardian)-  
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jan/21/venezuela-looting-violence-foodshortages>

<sup>44</sup> 4 Types of Constitutional Crisis (FiveThirtyEight)-  
<https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/constitutional-crisis/>

One thing that has changed is the amount of anti-government protests under Maduro. Protests throughout 2017 have left over a hundred dead and many more injured. Venezuelans are unsatisfied with the government's approach to managing the economy and are increasingly concerned about the current regime's attacks on democratic institutions. The government has repeatedly blocked any attempts to oust Maduro from power by a referendum vote. It has also delayed local and state elections. The parliamentary election of 2015 gave the opposition a majority, illustrating the widespread popular disapproval with his regime. In the meantime, civilians continue to suffer shortages, inflation, rising insecurity and crime, and overall hopelessness<sup>45</sup>. Many choose to seek a better future in Spain, Miami or other Latin American countries, generating a large migratory movement, where some migrants are able to travel further than others, which end up in the frontiers with Colombia and Brazil. The political, social and economic crisis combine to generate a humanitarian and refugee crisis, where Maduro's government refuses foreign aid and the country continues to submerge in chaos. Many opposition leaders and protesters have suffered prosecution even without evidence of any of the crimes they were accused for<sup>46</sup>.

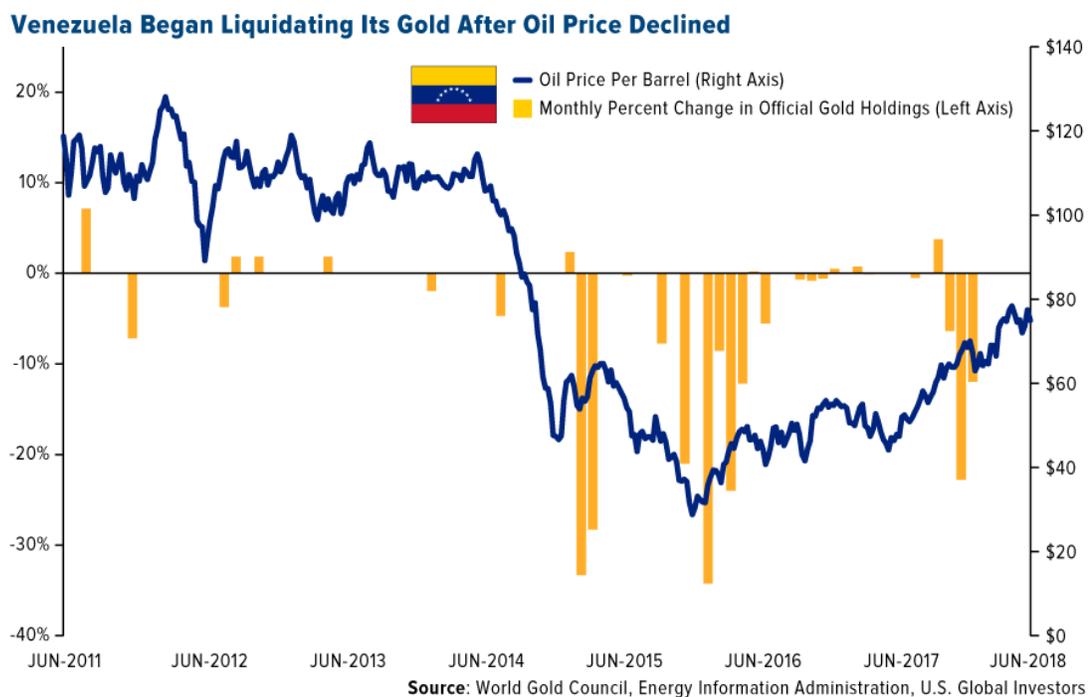


Figure 6: Gold Dealings in Venezuela  
 Source: Frank Holmes, Wait until you see the price of gold in Venezuela right now, <http://www.silverbearcafe.com/private/08.18/venezuela.html>

<sup>45</sup> UN urges all efforts to be made to lower tensions in Venezuela - <https://news.un.org/en/story/2017/04/555672-venezuela-un-urges-all-efforts-bemade-lower-tensions-venezuela>

<sup>46</sup> The tragedy of the Venezuelan opposition - <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/venezuela/2018-01-05/tragedy-venezuelanopposition>

In 2016, the Bolivarian National Intelligence Service (SEBIN) arrested dozens of people, claiming that they had planned, instigated or participated in violent actions against the government, including some that were in fact peaceful demonstrations. Many of those people claim to have been tortured or abused while in custody or that they were not allowed to see relatives or lawyers for hours, or sometimes days, after the arrest<sup>47</sup>. In several cases, prosecutors did not present credible evidence linking the accused citizens to specific crimes. In some, the evidence consisted in the possession of materials with political content, such as pamphlets in which the release of political prisoners was requested. In early 2014, the authorities responded to the massive demonstrations against the government with a brutal use of force<sup>48</sup>. Over several weeks, members of the security forces used excessive force against protesters who were unarmed and tolerated armed pro-government gangs which attacked protesters with impunity. In many cases, detainees were held for long periods of time before being brought before a judge, and some suffered abuses that included violent beatings, electric shocks or burns, and being forced to squat or kneel, without moving, for several hours<sup>49</sup>

## **Political Factions**

Venezuela is divided into two main factions: the Chavistas, the followers of the deceased Hugo Chavez and his policies, and the opposition, those who crave an ending to the Chavistas United Socialist Party (PSUV). The PSUV applauded Chavez and his party for using the wealth of oil to lift his constituents out of poverty, although the success of these programs is discussed in the economic portion of this guide. The Chavistas accuse the opposition of being an elitist capitalist group that desires to exploit Venezuela for their own gain. The opposition claims the PSUV has destroyed Venezuela's democracy with corruption and has run the economy into the ground with reckless and inefficient spending<sup>50</sup>. The president, Mr. Maduro, is a part of the PSUV and was handpicked as Chavez's successor, and was originally popular. However, his popularity has been plummeting. The economic turmoil and the government's inability to stop the recession has led to protests and increased support for the opposition party. On March 29, 2017, the Supreme Court announced they were "taking over the powers of the opposition-controlled National Assembly". There was immense backlash as the opposition claimed that this corrupted the country's separation of powers and consolidated power underneath President Maduro. Eventually the court backtracked on its decision, but this attempted power grab resonated with the people and has caused

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<sup>47</sup> Human Rights violations and mass protests in Venezuela -

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/>

<sup>48</sup> UN Human Rights Council confronts Venezuela -

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/10/02/un-human-rights-council-confronts-venezuela>

<sup>49</sup> What is a Humanitarian emergency (Humanitarian Coalition)-

<http://humanitariancoalition.ca/what-is-a-humanitarian-emergency>

<sup>50</sup> The tragedy of the Venezuelan opposition -

<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/venezuela/2018-01-05/tragedy-venezuelanopposition>

increased tension with the legislating body and Supreme Court<sup>51</sup>. Maduro claimed that the opposition party is trying to overthrow the elected government and blaming the country's problems on the economic war waged against him. While the opposition parties are not all unified under one party, the different oppositional groups share common beliefs and are calling for the ousting of Maduro<sup>52</sup>.

## **Past regional and international efforts**

### **Past Regional Efforts**

#### **U.S.A**

When Chavez got to power, he criticized the US heavily, considering it an imperialist power that posed a threat to his socialist model. Tensions between the countries rose; Chavez accused the US of fomenting a coup attempt in 2002, and Venezuela was included in Bush's "axis of evil" for a period of time. After the reports of human rights abuses and the breach of democracy in Venezuela, the US imposed economic sanctions on high-ranking officials in 2014. With Trump's arrival to the US presidency, relations have further strained. Trump intensified the economic sanctions on the country. He has also suggested the possibility of using military force to intervene in Venezuela, which in a sense legitimized Maduro's rhetoric against the US and was responded to with global rejection. The US has asked the OAS to suspend Venezuela from the organism. The US imports hundreds of thousands of barrels of oil per day from Venezuela, although imports have been decreasing for some time. Thus, it has an interest in maintaining Venezuela as a source for this energy resource. Both ideologically and strategically, Maduro's government is a nuisance for the US<sup>53</sup>.

#### **Russia**

After distancing itself from the US, Venezuela was led by Chavez towards a closer alliance with Russia. The countries have strong military ties: Venezuela is the second largest importer of Russian weapons in the world. Also, they have carried out joint military exercises in the past. When facing economic problems, Venezuela has received loans from the Russian government. These loans are often repaid through oil shipments from Venezuela to Russian oil companies, which account to as much as 13% of the country's total exports. Ties are also ideological: Chavistas would like to see an end to US hegemony in the world, and supporting Russia is,

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<sup>51</sup> Venezuela bans Attorney General to leave the country - <https://news.un.org/en/story/2017/06/560692-venezuela-bans-attorney-general-leaving-country-un-rights-office-voices-concern>

<sup>52</sup> Megan Specia, Newyork Times, What Is Happening in Venezuela? How It Got Here and Why It Matters - <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/24/world/americas/venezuela-news-protests-noticias-guaido-maduro.html>

<sup>53</sup> US imports from Venezuela of crude oil (US Energy Information Administration) - <https://www.eia.gov/dnav/pet/hist/LeafHandler.ashx?n=pets&s=mcrimusve2&f=a>

in Maduro's words, "part of an effort to build a multipolar world"<sup>54</sup>. For Russia, it is convenient to have a strong and dependent ally in the Americas region. Venezuela is close to the south of the US, and, as tensions between Russia and the US increase, Putin benefits from a loyal regional ally<sup>55</sup>. Since the Venezuelan opposition has declared that links with Russia would be reduced if it got to power, Putin has a very good incentive to protect Maduro's government politically, economically, militarily and diplomatically<sup>56</sup>.

## **China**

In a similar way to Russia, China provides significant support for the Maduro regime. The two countries have close economic ties, having undertaken joint economic programs in the energy, industry and transport sectors. China imports large amounts of oil from Venezuela, making the South American country an important strategic ally<sup>57</sup>. Military ties are not as strong as with Russia. As the economic crisis worsened in Venezuela, China provided favorable repayment plans for the many loans that it had previously provided to the country. However, it refused to lend more money. Still, Venezuela is important for China in a regional sense, since the alliance allows China to increase its influence in the Latin American region. Thus, China is keen on protecting Maduro's government on the international stage<sup>58</sup>.

## **Past Efforts of the International Community**

### **UN**

The Security Council has not issued resolutions regarding the crisis in Venezuela. In November 2017, Russia, China and other members boycotted a Security Council meeting on the issue. However, other UN bodies have gotten involved in different ways. The UN's High Commissioner for Human Rights has found that, during the protest movements of 2017, the government was responsible for many grave human rights violations, including arbitrary detention and torture. The United Nations have offered humanitarian aid to Venezuela<sup>59</sup>. Although, this has been turned down by Maduro, who claims to be afraid of the international community

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<sup>54</sup> Venezuela quickly becoming Russia's newest satellite state -

<http://thehill.com/opinion/finance/361176-venezuela-becoming-russias-newestsatellite-state>

<sup>55</sup> Venezuela plans to buy more Russian and Chinese arms -

<http://www.businessinsider.com/venezuela-plans-to-buy-more-russian-and-chinesearms-2015-4>

<sup>56</sup> Maxim Trudolyubov, The Moscow Times, The Putin Touch in Venezuela,

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2019/01/28/the-putin-touch-in-venezuela-op-ed-a64313>

<sup>57</sup> China and the Venezuela Crisis (The Diplomat) - <https://thediplomat.com/2017/07/china-and-the-venezuela-crisis/>

<sup>58</sup> China stays on the sidelines as Venezuela spirals downward -

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-venezuela-china/china-stays-on-the-sidelines-asvenezuela-spirals-downward-idUSKBN1GX0BO>

<sup>59</sup> UNHRC 37th meeting (UN Docs)- <http://undocs.org/A/HRC/37/L.34>

interfering in the country<sup>60</sup>. In November 2016, the Human Right Council's Working Group reviewed Venezuela and issued a list of 274 recommendations, ranging from poverty and health to political rights issues. Venezuela responded by arguing that it was already implementing many of the proposed solutions and stated that foreign powers had been trying to undermine its progress regarding human rights. In the 36th Session of the Human Rights Council at the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland September 11, 2017, the topic of the humanitarian crisis in Venezuela was addressed. Here the "Lima 12" (11 Latin American countries and Canada) condemned the breakdown of democratic order and the violation of human rights in Venezuela and expressed their concern about the government's refusal to accept international humanitarian aid<sup>61</sup>. In the Human Rights Council thirty-seventh session held in Geneva from 26th February to 23rd March 2018, a resolution was adopted which condemned the economic sanctions against Venezuela by the United States, Canada, the European Union and their allies<sup>62</sup>. It urged these countries to stop sanctioning other states since "such measures prevent the full realization of economic and social development of nations." In March 2018, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees published a protection guidance to orient those nations receiving Venezuelan migrants<sup>63</sup>. In the document, the body established that the migrants' basic rights should be respected, and that migrants should be given possibilities to legally stay in the territories they arrive to without fear of being forced to return to Venezuela. The organization offered its technical knowledge to assist those countries receiving migrants.

## **Conclusion**

As stated above it can be seen that the issues lie within the political turmoil in Venezuela had affected many aspects on its civilian's life. From the humanitarian crisis that mainly cause by poverty because of medical supplies shortage which affects the mortality rate nationally; the economic crisis that is cause by failed economic management, inflation and corruption, failed diversification; the political instability cause by the poor government mechanism by Hugo Chavez which continues to Nicholas Maduro's. Many efforts from international, regional, and national measures have been taken. Yet, the condition in Venezuela was a national problem which is self-inflicting the country and continues to spread in effects on the region. The root cause of the issues lies within the political regime that keeps continue

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<sup>60</sup> Venezuelan response to HRC recommendations (HRC) – <https://documents-ddsny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G16/185/69/PDF/G1618569.pdf?OpenElement>

<sup>61</sup> Declaración de Lima (Gobierno Argentino) - <https://www.mrecic.gov.ar/declaracionde-lima-0>

<sup>62</sup> Declaración de Lima (Gobierno Argentino) - <https://www.mrecic.gov.ar/declaracionde-lima-0>

<sup>63</sup> UNHCR issues new protection guidance (UNHCR) <http://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2018/3/5aa793c14/venezuelans-flee-throughoutlatin-america-unhcr-issues-new-protection-guidance.html>

over the year, in addition the separation of power which creates political factions recently had made the condition aggravate.

Thus, the UNSC and other countries shall hand in hand observe the issues on every aspect and should think of a solution that would be durable for the greater good of the country.

## **QARMAS**

1. How can Venezuela recover from their economic crisis? What measures can be taken on an international, regional, and national level?
2. Is Venezuela in need of new leadership? If a change is necessary, what are the best ways to achieve it?
3. Is the structure of the Venezuelan government in need of change in terms of separation of powers and equal distribution of power among state institutions? If it does, what measures can the national government take in order to rebuild their government structure?
4. How does the external intervention (i.e. international and regional organization) pose a solution? If it does, how can these interventions impact the future of Venezuela?
5. How can the UNSC mitigate rising issues such as abuse of human rights and socio-economic rights?

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