

Security Council

Enhancing the democratic process in Venezuela

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Introduction:

Since the beginning of the XXI century, we have seen an escalation in tension regarding Venezuela and its political situation, almost bringing the country to the brink of a civil war in 2017. This is due to the strong opposition of a part of the Venezuelan population towards the current political class, led by President Nicolás Maduro, who took up the office in 2013.

Since Maduro became President, Venezuela is living a condition of instability and political turmoil that exploded on March 30, 2017, when the Supreme Court divested the Parliament. This produced an immediate response by the opposition parties, which took to the streets in protest that often turned violent: on August 8, 2017, TeleSur reported a death toll of at least 124 people among protestors and supporters of the government (chavistas), bystanders and policemen.

Along with the political crisis there is a humanitarian crisis. Because of the protests and growing poverty, Venezuela is facing an a humanitarian crisis: there's little or no food, the little there is is extremely expensive; almost no medicines and basic necessities like toilet paper and hygienic products are lacking.

This is due to the ongoing economic crisis. Venezuela's economy relied mostly on oil but with the collapse of crude oil's price, the country has found itself with its income reduced to a third of the 30bln available. Venezuela is now estimated to possess around 10.5bln. While the government did not carry out measures to expand the other branches of its economy, it used the proceeds from oil sales to try to improve the population's living conditions (schools, hospitals, social housing).

Many Venezuelans have fled the country, creating the "Venezuelan Diaspora".

The situation has been evolving and changes can be expected.



***President Nicolás
Maduro.***

Countries and organizations:

1. Venezuela:



Population: 31.57 millions

Capital: Caracas

Official language: Spanish

Coin: Bolívar venezolano

- The Organization of American States (OAS):** a continental organization founded on 30 April 1948, for the purposes of regional solidarity and cooperation among its member states. They tried two times to pass a resolution to help the crisis: on both occasions it did not reach the quorum to pass. Delcy Rodríguez, ex-Venezuelan Foreign Minister now running for the Constituent National Assembly, stated that her country would "not recognize any resolution coming out of it."
- Canada, Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, Chile, Peru and Colombia:** collectively condemned the "breakdown of democratic order" in Venezuela and said they would not recognize any action taken by its "illegitimate" new constituent assembly.



"What we have in Venezuela is a dictatorship." -Peruvian Foreign Affairs Minister Ricardo Luna during a press conference. Luna said that it was important to address the "unprecedented regional crisis" in Venezuela collectively, but said some members of the new group may take individual actions to go further.



- USA:** The United States has imposed sanctions on senior Venezuelan officials, targeting current and former government officials, high-ranking military officers, and managers of the state oil company known as PDVSA for alleged human rights abuses, undermining democracy and corruption.

“Anyone elected to the national constituent assembly should know that their role in undermining democratic processes and institutions in Venezuela could expose them to potential US sanctions.” - US treasury secretary, Steven Mnuchin.



5. **European Union:** its members have expressed their opposition to the current government.

6. **Cuba, China, Bolivia, Russia, Iraq, Syria, Palestine, Libya, Ecuador, Vietnam, South Africa, and Iran and many other countries** have expressed their support of the current government.

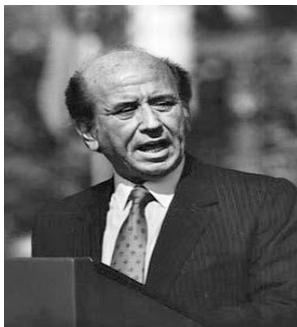
“We condemn any action that disturbs peace, tranquility, and democratic stability... and that threatens sovereignty, including the recent threats of a possible foreign military intervention,” - Cuba's ambassador to the Human Rights Council, Pedro Luis Pedroso.



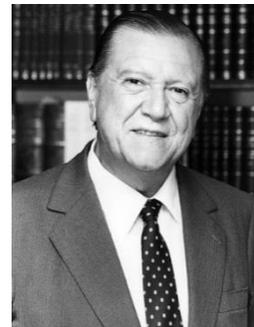
Overview:

To understand Venezuela current situation, we have to start from the 1950s.

In 1958, the military dictatorship of Marcos Pérez Jiménez came to an end and Venezuela entered a stage of democracy dominated by two major political parties: Acción Democrática (left wing) and COPEI (right wing); their respective leaders, Carlos Andrés Pérez for AD and Rafael Caldera for COPEI. Caldera won the 1968 elections, but in 1973 Pérez took his place as President.



Carlos Andrés Pérez



Rafael Caldera

In 1992, Pérez government experienced a coup d'état called “Operation Zamora, led by Hugo Chávez, a soldier supporting socialist ideas,” that had the objective of reinstalling Caldera as President, due to

a growing opposition from the population to the economic measures taken by Pérez. The coup failed, but Chávez popularity had already been growing among the population, who saw him as a fighter against the corrupt political class. He was sentenced to prison along with the men who took part in the coup. (for further info see: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hugo_Ch%C3%A1vez)

In 1993 Pérez was impeached for corruption and Caldera took his place. He soon freed Chávez and his men, giving them back their political rights (though banning them from the military). They promptly set off for a trip around South America, rallying support for the Bolivian cause. When Chávez came back, he became critical of Caldera's actions and ran for the 1998 elections.

Soon Chávez gained support from the population, especially the poor and lower classes, and won the election with almost 60% of the votes. He carried out a series of economic reforms to improve living conditions; repairing houses, roads, hospitals etc. and introduced the idea of reforming the Constitution. The referendum he organized to support his idea was a success, with almost 90% of the people supporting him; the second referendum to elect the representatives for the constituent was also a success: even though of roughly 1100 candidates around 900 were Chávez opponents, his men still gained 125 seats, the opposition only 6. In the drafting process of the Constitution, the opposition criticized Chavez's changes, which in their opinion were borderline dictatorship, as they made censorship easier and gave the executive branch more power. Nevertheless, in the referendum to approve it in 1999 Chavez won 72% of the votes.



Hugo Chávez

In the 2000 elections, Chávez was reconfirmed as president but in 2002 another coup d'état took place. On April 9, a strike was called by the CTV labor union (Confederación de Trabajadores de Venezuela) after Chávez appointed political allies in prominent places in Venezuela's national oil company, PDVSA. On April 11, in Caracas, up to 1.000.000 Venezuelans marched in protest. At one point during the march, opposition leaders redirected the protestors to the presidential palace, where government supporters were holding their own rally. The two parties confronted each other and by evening 19 people, both supporters and protesters, were dead. In the span of 3 days, Chávez lost his power, was almost tried but eventually regained his position as President.

Following this event, the PDVSA administration fires almost 20.000 employees to pressure Chávez for new elections, but they soon begin the production of oil again with the remaining employees loyal to Chávez. Unemployment rises from 5% to 20%.

All these attempts to overthrow his government were unsuccessful but radicalized Chávez even more, whose object was to build "socialism of the 21st century", following Fidel Castro's ideas.

In 2006 elections, Chávez was once more elected, creating a new constituent assembly and drafted a new constitution.

In 2012 Chávez became ill and sought treatment in Cuba, appointing Nicolás Maduro as his successor. On March 5, 2013, he's declared dead.

From that day on, the President is Nicolás Maduro. He won the election held in April with 50.61% of the votes, which the opposition called fraudulent, saying that he manipulated the vote. However, the Supreme Court named him legitimate president.

Starting from February 2014, protests and riots occurred regularly, protesting the measures taken by the government and the poor living conditions of the majority of the population. the arrest of protestor Leopoldo López is fundamental, he took to the streets in protest on February 12 with many others. He became the first political prisoner of the Maduro regime.

In 2016, in September the opposition obtains enough signatories to call for a referendum for new elections but Maduro refused to allow the referendum to take place. Over 2,000,000 people took to the streets; clashes with the police and the government supporters were many and often violent.



October 26, 2016. Carlos Eduardo Ramirez.



Protest in Caracas.



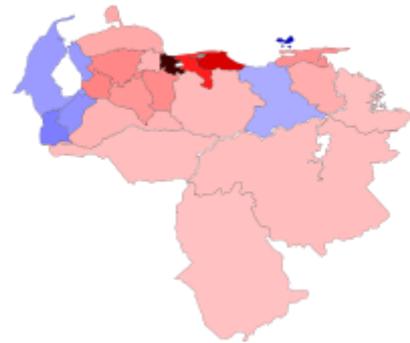
Maduro supporters.

In 2017, April, Maduro allowed the Supreme Court to divest the Parliament and took its power. Rage sparked the population, bringing about protests and marches against Maduro, the poverty and the terrible living conditions.

At that point there were more than 5000 inmates and 72 political prisoners. Opponents and international political leaders condemned the Maduro regime as a dictatorship, while others expressed their support for the government.

President Nicolás Maduro's party, the PSUV, won municipal elections of 10th December, and its coalition, the Gran Polo Patriótico Simón Bolívar, won the 98% of the available seats. Opposition parties boycotted the elections for alleged fraud in the 15th October state election. On December 11th President Nicolás Maduro said that these parties, according to what the National Assembly decided, won't be allowed to take part in the presidential election of 2018.

Red denotes states won by the Great Patriotic Pole. **Blue** denotes those won by the Coalition for Democratic Unity. These are the results of the regional elections of October 15th.



In the meanwhile, the tension lessened. Maduro's government and opposition began outlining guidelines for the future.

<https://www.telesurtv.net/english/news/Venezuela-Govt-and-Opposition-Reach-99-Consensus-in-Dialogue--20180205-0003.html>

The evolution of the humanitarian crisis:

From the HCR report:

“[...]Starting in 2014, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has experienced an aggravation in the economic crisis derived from the drop in the international price of oil and other factors such as currency and price controls, lack of investment in infrastructure and in the production system, and the heavy dependency on oil revenues to import basic goods. The deteriorating economic situation has caused hyperinflation and severe food, medicine and electricity shortages, which, combined with a drastic reduction of the Government's budget for social services, has led to a regression in the enjoyment of social and economic rights. The International Monetary Fund calculated a decrease of 18 per cent in real GDP in 2016 and inflation in three digits in 2017. According to an independent survey by Venezuelan universities, poverty increased in the country from 48 per cent in 2014 to 81.8 per cent in 2016. A February 2017 study found that 48 per cent of children experienced some level of malnutrition, while another survey reported that 74 per cent of Venezuelans lost an average of 8.7 kilos in 2016.6 According to estimates, the price of the basic food basket increased by 296.7 per cent between July 2016 and July 2017. In July 2017, a family of five would have needed to earn 14 minimum salaries to be able to purchase the food basket. The right to health has also been severely affected. The budget assigned to health for 2016 was reduced by 62 per cent compared to 2015. Maternal mortality increased by 65 per cent between 2015 and 2016 and child mortality by 29.5 per cent. Seventy-eight per cent of public hospitals lack or have insufficient medicines and 75 per cent lack or have insufficient surgical equipment. Doctors reported lack of medicines, for example

painkillers and medication for chronic and terminal diseases, such as diabetes, HIV/AIDS, or cancer. The country also experienced high levels of insecurity. There has been an upsurge in the number of violent crimes during the last decade. The Attorney-General reported 21,752 violent deaths during 2016, a ratio of 70.1 killings per 100,000 inhabitants. In 2016, Caracas ranked as the most violent city in the world, and three other Venezuelan cities were also among the top ten.¹³ High rates of impunity contributed to this level of violence.[...]"

But, Alfredo de Zayas, independent UN Human Rights commissioner who spent a week in Caracas, where he met government representatives, ONGs, National Assembly and parties of both the opposition and supporters of the President, said there isn't an actual crisis in the country.

The social situation could improve, if the tendency of rising oil prices subsists in the future. More income from oil would permit a better social status.

<https://www.thebalance.com/oil-price-forecast-3306219>

Whatever happens, Venezuela needs a broadening of its economic base, which cannot only rely on oil. The question of the development of productive structures pertinent to products other than oil is still open.

Key vocabulary:

Coup d'état: an occasion when a group of people suddenly takes control of a country using force.

Dictatorship: a country or system of government with a dictator as leader.

Socialism: a political system in which the government partially owns the means of production, thus allowing the people to reap greater benefits from profits.

Bolivarianism: a mix of pan-American socialist, and national-patriotic ideals against the perceived injustices of imperialism, inequality, and corruption. It is named after Simón Bolívar, the 19th-century Venezuelan general and liberator from the Spanish monarchy, who led the struggle for independence throughout much of South America.

Past resolutions and treaties:

The UN has not discussed the topic yet, only drafts for resolutions have been made up to now.

Past solutions:

Sanctions have been applied by countries such as the USA but not further actions have been taken yet.

Possible solutions:

- Diplomatic relationships are sure to be maintained and non-military solutions must be tried.
- Humanitarian help has to be given as soon as possible and provide the population with basic necessities such as food and medicines.
- Ways to liven up the economy have to be found, aiming at an expansion and diversification of the industrial production.
- Cooperation between government supporters and the opposition must be sought in every way, in order to bring further stability to the political situation.
- Financial plans have to be established in order to alleviate the Venezuelan international debt.
- Infiltrations or invasions by border countries (Colombia) must be prevented.

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