

# GEMUN 2018

## Security Council (SC)

### Topic 1: The political and social instability in Venezuela

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#### I. DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

**AD:** Democratic Action Party (*Acción Democrática*), a centrist party which governed Venezuela from 1958 to 1999 (with the exception of the elections of 1968 and 1978).

**Coup d'état (usually abbreviated as "coup"):** a sudden attempt to take over the government through violence, generally with the attempt to murder whoever is in charge.

**Inflation:** in economics it's referred to as a general increase in prices and fall in the purchasing value of money. This means that when inflation's high, people's salary is not enough for them to buy products they need in their society.

**Chavism(o):** a leftist political ideology based on President Hugo Chavez's ideals and policies.

**HRW:** Human Rights Watch is an international non-governmental organization (NGO) that conducts research and advocacy on human rights established in 1978.

## II. BACKGROUND INFORMATION



### Democratic Terms (1948-1998)

Before 1948, when for the first time was elected a president democratically, Venezuela had a history of military rule, almost ever since its detachment from Gran Colombia 1829. Then, in 1958, the leftist Romulo Betancourt with the AD party won the presidential elections, starting an almost continuous term executed by the democrats, which ended only in 1999.

It is fundamental to point out how since the beginning of the 20th Century Venezuela had become the world's largest oil exporter, but the peak was reached in 1973 when the country profits from the oil boom and its currency peaks against the US dollar. It is around this time that oil and steel industries are nationalised. It follows a florid period for Venezuelan history, which hit an economic depression only by the end of the eighties, when in 1989 Carlos Andres Perez (AD) is elected and launches an austerity programme, which causes many riots and a consequent martial law, with hundreds killed in the streets.

In 1992, two coups are attempted by Colonel Hugo Chávez and his supporters and 120 people are killed in suppression of these coups. However, only two years later president Perez is impeached on corruption charges.

### **Hugo Chávez's Term (1998-2013)**

In 1998, the former colonel who attempted the coup d'états in 1992 wins the presidential election, mainly thanks to the increasing disenchantment by the population with established political parties. His economic and social policies are socialist and populist by high oil prices and he launches a new constitution. His foreign policy is vocally anti-US, being more assimilated to Cuban lines. By 2001, he passes 49 laws aimed at redistributing land and wealth and in business grows the concern that he is going to concentrate the economic and political power in the hands of the state alone.

In April 2002, a coup attempt brought on by rebel armed forces who were fighting against the state's monopoly of oil production and distribution manages to have Chavez taken into military custody but the operation collapses and Chavez returns to office. After this event, in August 2004, the president wins a referendum, which allows him to serve out remaining two-and-a-half years of his term.

In the next few years, there are a number of fundamental reforms by Chavez's government: in January 2005, a decree on land reform is signed where large estates are eliminated to benefit rural poor. It is said by ranchers to be an attack on private property. Only a couple of months later, in March, a new media regulation provides new rules, with strict punishment, for slandering public figures and following this new regulation, the party refuses to renew the broadcasting license of the RCTV channel, which was critical of president Chavez. This prompts mass protests and a strong international condemnation. In December 2005, the opposition to Chavez boycotts the elections, which means parties loyal to President Chavez dominate the parliament.

By the end of 2007, President Chavez suffers his first defeat at ballot, when a referendum rejects proposals to increase government control over the Central Bank. Not even a year later Hugo Chavez announces plans to nationalise one of the country's largest private banks, the Bank of Venezuela.

In December 2010, the parliament allows peculiar powers to President Chavez to deal with the dangerous floods, increasing authoritarianism, while in April 2012 the Government creates a more rigid price control on basic goods in order to reduce inflation. President Chavez threatens to expropriate companies that do not comply with the price controls.

In October 2012, President Chavez wins his fourth term in office, with 54% of the vote on an official turnout at about 81% but only seven months later, in April 2013, Hugo Chavez dies after a battle with cancer. His chosen successor Nicolas Maduro is elected president by a narrow margin while the opposition contests the result.

### **Nicolás Maduro's term (2013-to the date)**

In September 2013 a power cut leaves 70% of Venezuela without electricity and President Maduro blames "right-wing saboteurs", while in 2015 inflation runs more than 50% a year and the National

Assembly gives President Maduro emergency powers for a year, with which he limits profit margin, which obviously as a result reduces income of the producers.

In 2014, the protests over the lack of security in the western states reaches Caracas and with a backing from opposition parties they turn into anti-government rallies. They are accused of launching a coup against the government and the protests are broken up. Up to 28 people die in the violence.

In January 2016, three Democratic Unity deputies resign from the National Assembly parliament under Supreme Court pressure, depriving coalition of clear two-thirds majority that would have allowed it to block legislation proposed by President Maduro. During 2016, in order to fight the economic crisis, President Maduro announces measures such as currency devaluation and the first petrol price rise in 20 years.

The responsibility for the economic crisis is given to President Maduro by the general population and hundreds of thousands of people take part in a protest in Caracas calling for the removal of the President. The protests continue, to the point where between April and June 2017 several people die in clashes against security forces during riots demanding early presidential elections and the revoking of a planned constituent assembly to replace the National Assembly. In July of the same year, the opposition holds an unofficial referendum in which a reported seven million people reject President Maduro's proposal to convene a new constituent assembly.

The subsequent election of the controversial constituent assembly takes place in the face of an opposition boycott and international condemnation.

### **Humanitarian repercussions**

In its reports regarding the humanitarian situation in Venezuela, HRW underlined the urgency of the current situation in the South American country. First and foremost the shortage of medicines, medical supplies and food which, for the NGO, has grown since 2014. In August 2016, a survey reported severe shortages of basic medicines in 76% of the hospitals surveyed, up from 55% in 2014 and 67% in 2015. While in a survey conducted in 2015, 87% of interviewees nationwide, most of whom coming from low-income households, said they had difficulty purchasing food, to the point where 12% were eating two or fewer meals a day.

Another reported issue is the condition of prisons. The human rights group "The Venezuelan Observatory of Prisons" reported that 6,663 people died in prisons between 1999 and 2015 and that as of July 2016, Venezuelans prisons has an average overcrowding of 210%.

### **III. MAJOR COUNTRIES INVOLVED**

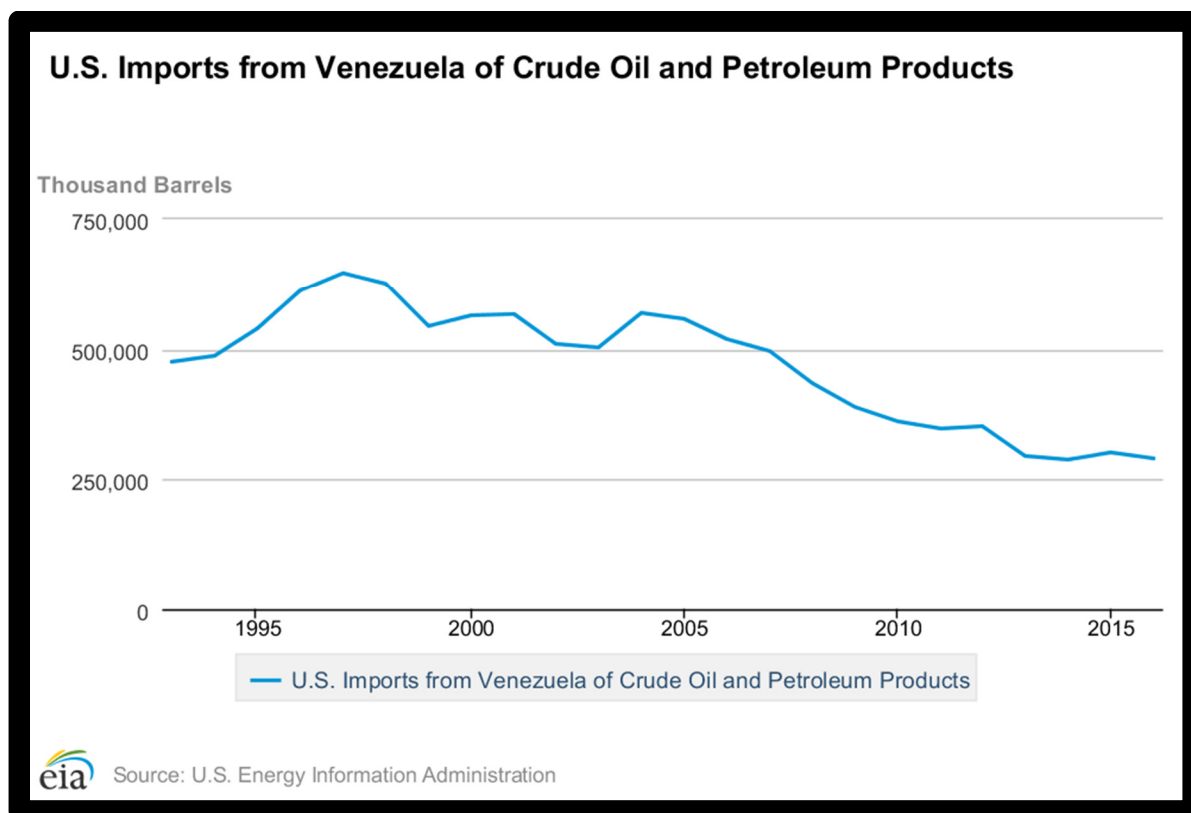
Even though this issue might look like it merely regards Venezuelan internal policy, a significant number of countries are affected by the state's current instability.



For instance, the Venezuelan situation could easily put at stake the fragile peace currently built in Colombia. In 2016, Bogotá managed to sign a peace deal with the country's largest rebel group: FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia). They agreed to disarm, but there is still a growing number of paramilitary groups who are especially strong near the Venezuelan border. This means that while the crisis in Venezuela weakens the government's power, the border areas far from the centralized power end up being the perfect spot for this rebel groups to retreat and strengthen to eventually cross back to Colombia. Moreover, the current state of despair in Venezuelan population allows these Colombian groups to easily recruit young Venezuelans for their purposes. These expansion in the rebel groups' forces could have a huge impact on the already frail and barely balanced peace settlements in Colombia.

Another country which is directly linked to the current Venezuelan crisis is the USA. As written beforehand in the historical background, major tensions between Venezuela and the United States started with Chavez's pro-Cuban ideology, mainly its complete and vocal aversion towards the States' imperialism. This political tension reaches an even greater importance when it is remembered how Venezuela lies over the world's largest deposit of petroleum (this territory is known as the Orinoco Belt) and that the US has always imported a huge quantity of raw oil and petroleum products from this area. In 2007, two leading US oil companies (Exxon Mobil and

ConocoPhillips) refuse to hand the control of their operations in this area to the Venezuelan government, and Chavez proceeds to expropriate them. However, only two years later President Chavez devalues the bolivar against the US dollar to boost revenue from oil exports after the economic shrinking of 2009.



After the election of Nicolas Maduro, by the President's same admission "[Venezuela] is in the worst moment of the relationship with the government of the United States", after President of United States Donald Trump threatened military intervention for the human rights crisis happening in Venezuela.

#### IV. UN INVOLVEMENT

The situation in Venezuela was taken into account by the United Nations for the first time in May 2017 when a closed-doors Security Council meeting was requested by the United States. This video shows the intervention in the meeting by Zeid Ra'ad al Hussein, a United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, regarding the current humanitarian situation in Venezuela (<http://webtv.un.org/watch/zeid-ra%E2%80%99ad-al-hussein-ohchr-on-the-situation-in-venezuela-security-council-arria-formula-meeting/5643399460001/?term=>). In November, the UN Human Rights Council scrutinized Venezuela's human rights record and Venezuela has been urged to cooperate with UN special procedures.



## **V. USEFUL LINKS**

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-36319877>

[http://www.independent.co.uk/news/long\\_reads/how-venezuela-went-from-the-richest-economy-in-south-america-to-the-brink-of-financial-ruin-a7740616.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/news/long_reads/how-venezuela-went-from-the-richest-economy-in-south-america-to-the-brink-of-financial-ruin-a7740616.html)

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/08/01/venezuelas-dubious-new-constituent-assembly-explained/?tid=a\\_inl&utm\\_term=.d00b9c678e1a](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/08/01/venezuelas-dubious-new-constituent-assembly-explained/?tid=a_inl&utm_term=.d00b9c678e1a)

<https://youtu.be/Ol9eMogKMPQ>

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<https://www.hrw.org/americas/venezuela>