

Committee: Special Political and Decolonisation Committee

Issue: The issue of foreign state involvement in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela as means of neo-imperialism

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Position: President

INTRODUCTION

Greetings, delegates, and welcome to the Special Political and Decolonisation Committee! My name is Eleftheria Arkadopoulou, I am a mechanical engineering student and it is my honour to be serving as this year's president of our committee. Should you have any questions about the topic at hand, our committee or your preparation as a whole, please don't hesitate to contact me at e.arkadopoulou@gmail.com.

As the committee name itself indicates, the SPECPOL Committee -also known as the 4th GA Committee- mostly deals with issues of a political theme, while its major focus is shifted towards decolonisation issues. Its agenda includes the examination of the management of information and intelligence, the question of Non-Self-Governing Territories, the monitoring of peacekeeping operations and other UN missions, the question of international outer space operations, the global effect of atomic radiation and the situation in the Middle East. The Question of Western Sahara, the University of Peace, the Assistance to Palestine Refugees and Israeli practices affecting the human rights of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem are among the latest draft resolutions proposed by the committee.



A brief introduction to the topic under discussion: the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is a Spanish-speaking country located in the northern coast of South America, and consists of 23 states. After overthrowing the Spanish rule, which was initiated by the arrival of Christopher Columbus in Southern America, Venezuela breaks off from Grand Colombia and becomes an independent state. Ever since then, its leadership has shifted hands and policies multiple times; even though the shift of focus towards the economy and agriculture,

together with the key role the Republic played in the international oil market, significantly contributed to the state's prosperity, the rise of inflation, the evident corruption in the political scene and the persistent violation of human rights triggered a major political turmoil. This political instability has drawn the interest and concern of the international community, which stands divided on the topic; the goal of this study guide is to provide an overview of the situation and lay the foundation to examine whether the aforementioned foreign state involvement in the crisis reaches the extent of neo-imperialism.

Important note from the chairs' team

In order for the chairs to fully understand the dynamics of the committee, discovering any misunderstanding prior to the debate and for the better preparation of the delegates you are asked to proceed as indicated below;

- 1) Conduct your chairs via email and informing them about your mun experience so that they can know what exactly to expect of you.
- 2) Prepare and send your chairs by 11:59 of the 6th of November one position papers for each of the topics you are going to discuss during the conference. You can conduct the expert chair, of each topic for further information concerning your country's policy if needed, and for general guidance when it comes to your position papers (word limit structure etc). You are going to receive general comments during the lobbying for your position papers as well as personal feedback and grades for your papers. The points you will receive will add up to your general score which is one of the factors that determine the best delegate award. If you for any reason fail to send your papers before the final deadline you will not be eligible for any award.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Imperialism

A state policy, practice, or advocacy of extending power and dominion, especially by direct territorial acquisition or by gaining political and economic control of other areas¹. Neo-imperialism addresses the contemporary form of imperialism.

Coup d'état

Also referred to as "coup", a coup d'état is a sudden defeat of government through illegal force by a small, often military, group².

¹ Encyclopedia Britannica

Constituent Assembly

A body of representatives that is elected to alter or amend the current constitution of a state or establish a new one. In the Venezuelan Constitution, Article 347 states: “The Venezuelan people are the depositary of the original constituent power. In the exercise of that power, it can convene a National Constituent Assembly with the purpose of transforming the state, creating a new legal system and drafting a new Constitution”.³

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela: key figures and series of events 1998-today

In 1998, after two failed military coup d'état attempts, Hugo Chávez wins the presidential elections and, thus, a new era arises. He launches the ‘Bolivarian Revolution’, which introduces a new national constitution, and steers his attention towards the country’s oil economy; undoubtedly, in his time of reign, oil prices enjoy an ascent and, therefore, the country’s GDP rises. However, he adopts an anti-USA foreign affair policy, mostly by overturning the privatisation of the now state-ran country’s biggest oil provider company, and initiates a close collaboration with the Russian Federation, majorly based on military trade, indicating a clear preference towards one of the two and prioritisation of sustaining better relations with one over the other.

Later on in his presidency, Mr Chávez introduces laws of land and wealth redistribution, whose nature raises concerns that he is trying to concentrate excessive power in his hands. After another failed military coup d'état attempt in 2002, a political crisis begins to unfold, with the leadership attempting to seize private property by passing state-favouring laws and the media’s right to freedom of speech by arbitrary prosecutions of journalists who report on the government’s actions. Four years later, Mr Chávez renews his presidential term and intensifies his aforementioned efforts: he expropriates two leading US oil companies from the country’s market, signs an oil agreement with the Russian Federation. However, due to the leadership’s attention being focused on oil, shortages in basic supplies trigger a humanitarian crisis. After further enforcing censorship on the media

² Cambridge English Dictionary

³ Melimopoulos, E. (2017). Venezuela: What is a National Constituent Assembly?. [online] Aljazeera.com.

attempting to slander any public figures, Mr Chavéz wins the 2012 elections but dies shortly after. His preferred successor and firm supporter, Nicolas Maduro, takes on the nation's presidency, following a contested election.

The civilians, who are already suffering by a 50% rise in inflation and basic good scarcity, are not jubilant with the election outcome, and therefore rush to the streets, conducting anti-government protests, during which they are violently confronted. The leadership won't cease the attempts to silence the media, the oil prices begin to fall and the market is about to collapse. The government holds a referendum to approve the establishment of a Constituent Assembly, which will review the constitution; however, upon approval of it by said referendum -the credibility of which is internationally challenged-, the Assembly accumulates more legislative power than it was originally intended to. During the last half of 2018, government and opposition clashes escalate and new elections are held, the outcome of which reaffirms the electoral win of Mr Maduro. Nevertheless, these elections face both national and

international condemnation, and while Mr Maduro inaugurates president in January 2019, the opposition leader, Juan Guaidó, swears himself in as interim president of the nation and proclaims the latest elections were rigged.



Impact and consequences

The crisis triggered during the dawning of Mr Chavéz's presidency quickly escalated after him passing on his duties to Mr Maduro. The political instability and the abuse of power on behalf of the leadership resulted into violation of both political and human rights weighing down the Venezuelan citizens. Based on this categorisation, we are to examine the impact the political turmoil had on the economy and the population.

Regarding the political rights perspective, it is currently more evident than ever that censorship is being imposed on freedom of expression, both when it comes to media as collective corporations and to separate individuals, especially opposition leaders and supporters. Following the government's continuous attempts to seize control of the media, legislation which 'permits the suspension or the cancellation of given privileges to the

private media sector in favour of the nation's interests' has passed, whereas an anti-hate law was adopted by the Constituent Assembly, forbidding and imposing prison sentences on anyone exercising - a vaguely defined- hate speech, thus blackmailing citizens and/or media away from freely criticising and questioning the leadership's actions. Arbitrary prosecutions of journalists are not uncommon and almost always go impune, while impromptu arrests and holding or even imprisonment of citizens often occur, especially during mass protests, where security forces enjoy excessive power. This has resulted in a vague international view of the exact situation inside the country, since there are only a few reports from within that have escaped the strict silencing imposed. What is more, a penitentiary crisis is simultaneously unfolding: prisons lack appropriate facilities, the prisoners are living under packed and inhumane conditions and they are mostly denied any kind of medical treatment and are subject to police/security force brutality, thus reporting on practices that by no means comply with the internationally-recognised Mandela Rules on Treatment of Prisoners⁴.

Simultaneously, Venezuela is suffering from a perpetually deteriorating humanitarian plague. Kicking off as a malnutrition crisis triggered by immense food and basic goods shortage, the crisis escalated when



hyperinflation hit and the government set a monopoly on agricultural products; basic commodities' prices came to an all-time high and, therefore, became unaffordable for the citizens. To combat the problem, Local Supply and Production Committees (CLAPs) were issued by the government; however, in order for them to function, the government announced that it will be seizing 50% of all supply of food companies at fixed prices, an act that emasculated the food market. All in all, although still running, the CLAP programme

⁴ https://www.unodc.org/documents/justice-and-prison-reform/GA-RESOLUTION/E_ebook.pdf

failed to meet international nutrition standards. Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) together with individual states have put together food programmes and humanitarian aid packages in order to alleviate the tension. Apart from the malnutrition issue, Venezuelan citizens are suffering from poor health care services: medicines and even basic first aid kits are unaffordable due to the aforementioned reasons, and hospitals lack the necessary equipment - indicatively of the medical emergency, according to a Human Rights Watch report in April 2019⁵, ‘the latest official statistics available from the Venezuelan Ministry of Health indicate that in 2016, maternal mortality rose 65 percent and infant mortality rose 30 percent in just one year’, let alone the fact that patients in hospitals are obliged to bring their own water, antiseptic and medical gloves.

The issue of foreign involvement

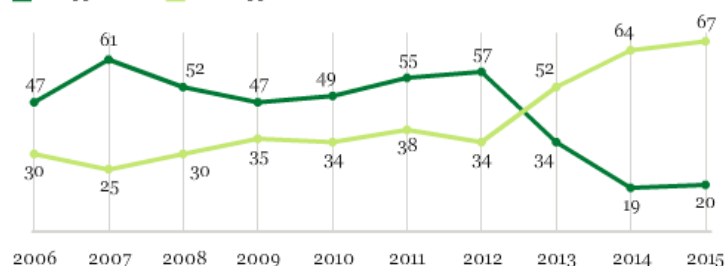
Alarmed by the emergency nature of the crisis and by the constant warnings of the World Health Organisation and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, most UN member states have waived their silent stance and are actively pushing Venezuela officials to allow intervention. As mentioned before, under collaboration with NGOs, many have attempted to contribute by offering assistance in the form medical, nutritional and financial aid; however, Mr Maduro’s government has denied almost all help from the outside -aside from the latter-, claiming it poses a neo-imperialistic threat as a means of intervening and violating the nation’s sovereignty. Indeed, national sovereignty undoubtedly is a universally granted right for each state, and thus the government’s right to deny any aid provided from the outside and denounce as an intervention attempt is protected. Noting that, it is true that certain attempts to, by default, provide help, tend to turn into an aggressive push towards the government or, in particular instances, end up in expressing dissatisfaction through blackmailing, e.g. embargos.

From a historical perspective, during the period of the independence revolutions against the Spanish rule in what we now refer to as Latin American countries, the concept of

Approval of Venezuelan Leadership

Do you approve or disapprove of the job performance of the leadership of this country?

■ % Approve ■ % Disapprove



⁵ <https://www.hrw.org/report/2019/04/24/un-response-need>

[/large-scale-](#)

national sovereignty played a major role in uniting the civilians and directing them against the conquistadors in each ex-Latin republic but also in separating the mass league of Latin nations that was formed after independence was granted. In 1933, a Pan-American conference is held in Uruguay, where the long-standing demand of Latin American countries of prohibiting third parties from intervening in internal or external affairs is succumbed to - thus, the long-awaited upon sovereignty is granted, and Venezuelan leadership still seems to hold on to that very idea and demand. However, this poses the question of whether international interventionism in the name of humanitarianism against a leadership who is deemed to be unjust should be accepted, even though it suggests a violation of the aforementioned and high-held sovereignty. On the latter, oppositional side, international experts and leading NGOs alert that, unless a drastic humanitarian assistance (of an intervening nature) takes place, Venezuela population is pacing towards a certain demise.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

United States of America (USA)

Over the past decades, the relations between the United States of America and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela have shifted multiple times. Even though the two countries shared a strong cooperation bond when Venezuela had a huge share in the oil market, their relations have deteriorated since President Chavez was elected, for the US strongly disapproved of his policy of external and internal affairs. Under US President Barack Obama, sanctions were imposed to Venezuela officials due to it being “a threat to national security” and in response to the repression exercised on citizens that were protesting. Ever since the election of US President Donald Trump, who recently recognised Gaido as the interim leader of the country, the US has openly been criticising Maduro’s actions and has even imposed sanctions and a ban on all flights to and from Venezuela, as a means of protesting their dissatisfaction; moreover, there have been statements of the President’s national security team about military intervention suggesting a serious options, and claimings from the opposite side that they are considering to ask for one.. Once again, it is important to highlight the key role oil plays not only when it comes to Venezuela’s economy, but when it comes to the loosening and strengthening of the Venezuela-US relations.



Donald J. Trump 
@realDonaldTrump

Follow

The citizens of Venezuela have suffered for too long at the hands of the illegitimate Maduro regime. Today, I have officially recognized the President of the Venezuelan National Assembly, Juan Guaido, as the Interim President of Venezuela.

Russian Federation

Under President Chavez, Russia and Venezuela shared a strong cooperation bond, mostly due to the ongoing trade of military intelligence and equipment between the two, while the latter has also been a major oil supplier for the former as well. Russia President Vladimir Putin has openly expressed support for Mr Maduro from the first days of his presidency, and continues to recognise him as leader of the country despite the international outcry regarding the credibility of the latest elections. In return, Mr Maduro has stood up for Russia's military operations and interventions. The Russian Federation has been perpetually providing Venezuela with military troops throughout the ongoing crisis of the latest years, interfering with the US embargo policy; this has caused further tension between the two P5 countries on the issue, which escalated with President Putin claiming that "destructive interference from abroad blatantly violates basic norms of international law". The fact that Russia allies so closely with Mr Maduro's government provides the opportunity for Russia to assert its dominance geographically close to the US and therefore poses an imminent threat.

European Union (EU)

At an almost unanimously joint stance, the European Union is openly supporting Mr Gaido and recognises him as president, while many EU states are pressing Mr Maduro to hold new elections. Starting in 2017, the EU Council has imposed sanctions on the Bolivarian Republic, which include an embargo on arms and a legal basis for a possible targeted listing of persons, and which are, since then, renewed every year. During the 2018-2019 period of Mr Maduro's realm, the EU has constantly been pushing for a fair, credible and democratic election process; what is more, it has established an international contact group, together with other Latin American countries, which will 'seek to promote a common understanding and a concerted approach among key international actors on the situation in Venezuela',

whose focus is shifted towards ensuring a peaceful transition to stability. Regarding a possible military intervention in Venezuela, the EU has explicitly stated it must be avoided at all costs.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Description of Event
1945	Coup d'état establishes first civilian government after military rule
1983	Oil market starts to fall - economy becomes to descend
1989	Democratically elected president Charles Perez introduces harsh austerity measures, causing public protests
1998	Hugo Chavez is elected Populism begins to rise as a reaction to the descending economy Venezuela - US relationships start to deteriorate
2006	President Chavez establishes cooperation with the Russian Federation
2013	Nicolas Maduro succeeds Hugo Chavez in leadership Inflation rises and economy is further crippled Mass protests against President Maduro rise all over the country US strongly criticises President Maduro's policy
2017	Constituent assembly of government supporters is elected and reviews constitution
2018	Humanitarian crisis has reached its peak Leadership refuses humanitarian aid provided by the UN
2019	Elections are held - Nicolas Maduro emerges as the winner International community and Venezuelan people condemn election outcome as deeply flawed and rigged Opposition leader Juan Gaido declares himself interim president US imposes flight embargo to Venezuela

UN INVOLVEMENT: RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

- Draft Security Council Resolution S/2019/186 proposed by the United States of America - 28 February 2019, on the topic of the Venezuelan elections (https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_2019_186.pdf)
- Draft Security Council Resolution S/2019/190 proposed by the Russian Federation - 28 February 2019, on the topic of the Venezuelan elections (https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_2019_190.pdf)
- Human Rights Council Resolution A/HRC/39/L.1/Rev.1 - 26 September 2018, on the promotion and protection of human rights in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (<https://undocs.org/A/HRC/39/L.1/Rev.1>)

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

Since 2013, the ongoing turmoil in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has been troubling the international community from both a political and a humanitarian approach. We will be focusing on the efforts conducted to ameliorate this crisis and the extent to which they are deemed to be connected with neo-imperialism.

The United Nations, troubled by the all-time high scarcity rate of goods and the alarming poverty rate civilians are living under, together with the Red Cross and the World Health Organisation, has offered humanitarian aid in the form of food programmes, medical care packages and basic goods, which, however, were refused by Mr Maduro. When discussed in the UN Security Council meeting on 26 February 2019, the Venezuelan Minister of the People's Power for Foreign Affairs affirmed that the humanitarian assistance provided -and, more specifically, the one provided by the US- was acting as a cover for aggression and intervening intentions.

On September 28, 2018, the United Nations Human Rights Council adopted 10 resolutions regarding the ongoing turmoil on Myanmar and Venezuela. Briefly, these included:

- calling upon the government of Venezuela to accept the humanitarian aid provided,

- a request for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to report on the situation,
- a request for the establishment of a UNHRC Working Group regarding the use of mercenaries as a means of violating human rights and
- calling upon all states to consider strategies for combating the current impunity of violence against journalists and reporters.

These resolutions were neither welcomed nor refused by Venezuela officials.

As mentioned before, the European Union has framed an international contact group (ICG) composed of Latin American countries, which will 'seek to promote a common understanding and a concerted approach among key international actors on the situation in Venezuela'⁶. On May 26 2019, a mission of ICG representatives set out to Venezuela to meet with relevant Venezuela actors, emphasising their intention of finding a peaceful and democratic solution to the crisis. Their engagement was welcomed and highly appreciated by said actors.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Undoubtedly, the greatest concern regarding the issue of foreign involvement in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is the question of whether or not the international community is to meddle with state affairs. On the one side, it could be argued that member states are to opt for bold military intervention, which would coerce the government to step down and allow for aid to reach the country, while a regime of democratic practices is enforced. This, despite the high possibility of ensuring a transition of power, could blandly be seen -as it currently is by Mr Maduro- as an attempt by other member states to take over the Republic in a neo-imperialistic frenzy, and, therefore, its peaceful intentions are to be questioned. On the other hand, the option to perpetually badger the Venezuelan government to shift tactics and to openly offer aid seemingly proposes a more peaceful shift of the regime. Nonetheless, this policy has until now proven to be ineffective and, although most likely successful in the long term, we must bear in mind that the state is in need of immediate assistance.

⁶ COLAC 12 CFSP/PESC 79 - <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-5958-2019-INIT/en/pdf>

Aside from military intervention, there are several other practices of engagement of the international community. First and foremost, in order to ensure the transparency and credibility of the state procedures, members states could account for international observers to supervise and to report on the situation concerning the elections that are to be held, the independence of the judiciary system, the targeted listing of opposition individuals and the extent to which the civilians' political rights, for instance their freedom of speech and expression, are violated. Other than that, in order to combat the continuous rise of inflation and the thus-caused scarcity in basic goods and job places, states could establish a Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) initiative on Venezuela and pave the way towards rebuilding a stable economy. These tactics could be considered as a middle ground between directly intervening with the nation's sovereignty and holding a passive, observing stance of the crisis.

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