

Group of Latin American and Caribbean Countries (GRULAC)

MetMUNC XLVIII

Topic: Increasing National Security Threats by Venezuela

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Venezuela, formally known as the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, is a country on the northern coast of South America, comprised of the continental mainland as well as numerous small islands and islets in the Caribbean Sea (*Figure 1*). The city of Caracas is the capital and the largest urban agglomeration in Venezuela.

Additionally, the country has an extremely high biodiversity and is ranked tenth—tied with the United States of America—in a list of the most biodiverse countries in the world.¹ The sovereign state is a federal presidential constitutional republic under the authority of President Nicolás Maduro. However, the presidency has been disputed between

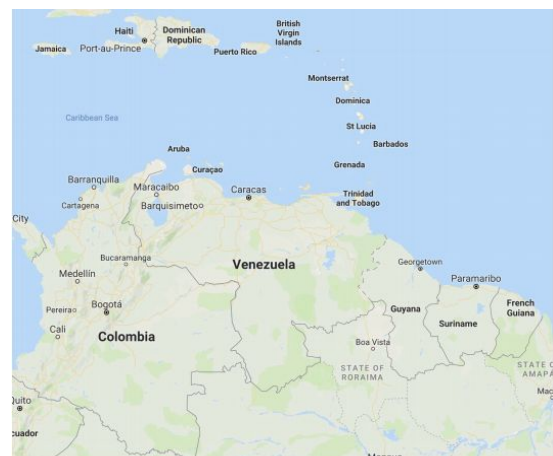


Figure 1. This illustrates the geographical location of Venezuela in Latin American.

Juan Guadio and Nicolás Maduro since January 2019 in the ongoing Venezuelan presidential crisis.² The actions of President Maduro and the consequences of his autocratic tendencies on Latin American and the Caribbean has resulted in increasing national security threats by

¹ <https://news.mongabay.com/2016/05/top-10-biodiverse-countries/>

² <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-36319877>

Venezuela. These tendencies have also resulted in a humanitarian crisis that foreshadows a catastrophic geopolitical conflict.

Maduro's tactics and ideals resemble his overwhelmingly successful predecessor, Hugo Chavez, but have not had as positive an impact. Chavez's presidency from 1999 to 2013 was defined by economic booms, unprecedented civilian satisfaction, and genuine landslide elections. Maduro's presidency in comparison has managed to produce severe economic recessions and food shortages; constant civilian dissent and protest; and authoritarian actions that can be considered human rights abuses. The odd thing is, Chavez had hand-picked Maduro to be his successor. So what happened? Where did Maduro go wrong? The answer lies in their diverging personalities. Even by branding himself as the "son of Chavez," Maduro lacked many of the traits that made Chavez so successful. Chavez was extremely charismatic, capable of uniting people across socioeconomic barriers from elites to the masses. This made it easy to ignore his autocratic tendencies. Chavez kept his allies in power, restricted freedom of the press, and removed power checks, all while keeping up his benevolent image. Maduro, despite modeling his policies after Chavez, has not managed to charm the nation- evident by his 50.6% voting reception- or control his own administration.^{3 4}

Maduro's attempt to mimic Chavez have been scant. His attempts to use Chavez's tactics are poorly executed and are rendered ineffective in the present day situation in Venezuela. Many of Maduro's problems stem from the 2014 oil crash when global oil prices tanked, causing severe damage to the industry Chavez had relied on for so long. Venezuela has the world's largest known oil reserves, hence oil exports were the foundation of the Venezuelan economy. Consequently, Venezuelans had to rely on food and medicine imports. Without oil money,

however, access to those imports have become a luxury. Since then, Maduro has refused to take action, starving his country- so much so that the entire population had lost nineteen pounds on average between 2015 and 2016.^{3 4}

As a result of Maduro's inaction to solve the humanitarian crises within the nation, civilian backlash has intensified. Particularly, Venezuela has been torn apart by violent protests led by a relentless opposition movement. Numerous residents of Venezuela have joined anti-government protests (*Figure 2*) against Maduro, demanding that he step down from power.

Protesters are convinced that Maduro has been eroding the Venezuelan democracy.^{3 4} As the country's protests begin to evolve into prolonged standoffs between demonstrators and the government, questions are being raised about whether or not Maduro will survive.



Figure 2. Thousands of Venezuelan protesters march on Caracas highways.

And as these various humanitarian crises intensify, President Maduro is using the crisis as an excuse for strengthening his executive power. In response to the uprisings, Maduro violently cracked down on street protests with military forces, killing more than 46 demonstrators (and



Figure 3. A member of the National Guard fires at protesters during clashes in Caracas.

injuring many more) in recent months (*Figure 3*). In addition, Maduro imprisoned major political rivals, postponed state elections in order to prevent his party from getting wiped out, and held a rigged election for a special legislative body that replaced the Venezuelan

³ <https://www.vox.com/world/2017/9/19/16189742/venezuela-maduro-dictator-chavez-collapse>

⁴ <https://www.cnn.com/2017/04/18/americas/venezuela-protest-explainer/index.html>

Parliament.⁵ The country's parliament was the only branch in the government that could oppose Maduro. But with the removal of the parliament, Maduro's executive power has become unchecked, and therefore nearly limitless.

Venezuela has dramatically changed in character since Maduro's election. This change in character presents two catastrophic consequences: (1) a massive migration crisis and (2) sanctions against a country in the midst of an economic crisis. For starters, rule under Maduro has damaged the spirit of its citizens. Starved, poor, and dissatisfied, more than four million Venezuelans have already fled the country since the end of 2015.⁶ And it's up to nearby countries like Colombia and Peru to house these migrants and refugees, and there's only so many they can take in. These migrations result in escalating crime rates among other problems in those countries. Even as these tensions rise, Maduro has not been afraid to display his military force. So much so that many countries, the United States in particular, have declared Venezuela a national security threat, imposing sanctions on the country.⁷ This second consequence has had dramatic effects on Venezuela's collapsing economy, but Maduro is unwilling to make concessions. To further complicate matters, Maduro has retained military loyalties—and powerful allies like China and Russia—in spite of political rival Juan Guaidó's attempts. This makes the Maduro regime dangerous, and explains why Venezuela is considered a national security threat.

Therefore, the question of how this situation can be tackled can be confusing. Venezuela is in the midst of a political, economic, and refugee crisis. It has become clear that these

⁵ <https://www.vox.com/world/2017/9/19/16189742/venezuela-maduro-dictator-chavez-collapse>

⁶ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-48559739>

⁷ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-venezuela-politics-pompeo/maduro-government-a-threat-to-u-s-national-security-pompeo-idUSKCN1RM25K>

problems stem from poor policy and a stubborn government. Many believe that the Venezuelan crisis can be resolved through several rounds of reform. Firstly, Maduro's focus on the oil industry has led to a weak dependency economy, leaving Venezuela's food and medicine industry underdeveloped. Efforts must be made to bolster weak industries and reduce the country's reliance on imports. Secondly, the humanitarian crisis in Venezuela must be considered. Considering Venezuela's feeble position, Maduro's policies and actions are uncalled for, and have only made matters worse. And lastly, Venezuela's migration crisis has put massive strains on nearby Latin American countries. Therefore, refugee resettlement programs are crucial to the many Venezuelans displaced by Maduro's government.⁸ Only a resolution that acknowledges the many underlying factors that cause the increasing national security threats in Venezuela will scratch the surface of the issue.

⁸ <https://www.vox.com/world/2017/9/19/16189742/venezuela-maduro-dictator-chavez-collapse>

Questions to Consider:

1. Is your nation affected by the migration crisis posed by government actions in Venezuela?
2. Is your country threatened by the Venezuela's attempts to militarize?
3. What trade relations (if any) does your country hold with Venezuela?
4. Is your country in a position to provide aid to Venezuela?
5. In what way would increased militarization in Venezuela affect your country?

Helpful Links:

- <https://www.vox.com/world/2017/9/19/16189742/venezuela-maduro-dictator-chavez-collapse>
- <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-venezuela/u-s-declares-venezuela-a-national-security-threat-sanctions-top-officials-iduskbn0m51ns20150310>
- <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-venezuela-politics-pompeo/maduro-government-a-threat-to-u-s-national-security-pompeo-idUSKCN1RM25K>
- <https://www.cnn.com/2018/06/28/world/mike-pence-venezuela-crisis/index.html>
- <https://www.cnn.com/2017/04/18/americas/venezuela-protest-explainer/index.html>
- <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-36319877>