FORUM: Security Council
ISSUE: Potential intervention in Venezuela
AUTHORS: Raaghav and Haroun
POSITION: Chair, Secretary-General

What is the UNSC and how does it work?

The United Nations Security Council is an organ of the United Nations with "primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security". This includes the potential to establish international sanctions and peacekeeping operations, as well as authorise military action and investigate conflicts. It is the only UN body that can issue binding resolutions to other member states – in other words, you have to do what it says. Furthermore, it deals with the admittance of new UN member states and Secretary-General (UN leader candidacies). It is thus a very powerful body within the UN, and has been involved in serious international issues, including the Korean War, the Suez Canal Crisis and more recently the Rwandan Genocide.

The UNSC has 15 members, five of whom are permanent members: France, the UK, the USA, China and Russia (essentially the victors from WW2). These permanent members have veto powers; should they vote against a resolution, it automatically does not pass. Resolutions otherwise require a 2/3 majority to pass, or 10 votes in favour. The 10 non-permanent members are elected for two-year terms on a regional basis; the African Group holds 3 seats, the Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia-Pacific, and Western European and Others groups, 2 seats, and the Eastern European group, 1 seat. The presidency of the UNSC rotates monthly.

UNSC non-permanent members in 2025 were Algeria, Denmark, Greece, Guyana, Pakistan, Panama, Republic of Korea, Sierra Leone, Slovenia, Somalia

More information can be found in the guidance documents available on the WESMUN website.

Background

In the 20th century, Venezuela's political trajectory was defined by a series of military dictatorships, democratic transitions, and the rise of oil dependency. After gaining independence from Spain in 1821, Venezuela experienced periods of instability, with military strongman Juan Vicente Gómez (1908-1935) consolidating power and controlling the country for nearly three decades. Following his death, democracy was restored, leading to the 1958 overthrow of dictator Marcos Pérez Jiménez, and the establishment of the Punto Fijo Pact, which fostered democratic stability for several decades.

However, Venezuela's over-reliance on oil exports led to economic vulnerability. By the 1980s, falling oil prices, corruption, and inequality sparked unrest, culminating in the

1989 Caracazo protests. In the late 1990s, Hugo Chávez emerged with a socialist agenda, leveraging widespread dissatisfaction with the political establishment. Chávez's policies were initially popular but led to economic mismanagement. His death in 2013 left his successor, Nicolás Maduro, in power, and Venezuela has since spiralled into a severe economic crisis marked by hyperinflation, food shortages, and mass migration, with over 7 million people fleeing the country as of 2023.

Current situation

Venezuela is facing a severe crisis across multiple sectors. Politically, the government of Nicolás Maduro, in power since 2013 following Hugo Chávez's death, remains in control despite opposition challenges. In 2019, opposition leader Juan Guaidó declared himself interim president, receiving support from the US and other nations, but Maduro has retained military backing and the loyalty of key sectors.

Venezuela continues to grapple with hyperinflation, which hit 686.4% in 2020, and severe shortages of basic goods. The economy, heavily dependent on oil exports, has been further crippled by US sanctions and falling oil prices. The country's GDP shrank by more than 70% since 2013, and unemployment stands at around 50%. This has been complicated by the Venezuelan armed forces- which have remained loyal to Maduro, with force often used to suppress protests and opposition. There have been attempts of foreign intervention, including a botched coup attempt in 2020, but the military remains a hegemonic force for the government.

Finally, Venezuela is experiencing a massive exodus, with over 7 million citizens fleeing since 2014, mainly to neighbouring countries. Poverty rates have skyrocketed, and public services, including healthcare and education, have collapsed. The nation also faces mammoth corruption and mismanagement.

The question of intervention

Intervention remains a controversial yet indispensable tool for the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). Notably, intervention could enable the UN to effectively oversee free elections and collect vital data on human rights, the neutrality of law, and the functioning of Venezuela's economic systems. Such a step would also allow major powers like Russia and the United States to offer counsel and aid in the stabilisation of Venezuela, each contributing their own vision of what a peaceful and economically stable Venezuela could look like.

Importantly, UNSC members must take concrete steps to safeguard the civil, human, and autonomous rights of all Venezuelans, ensuring that any intervention does not impede the eventual restoration of the Venezuelan state.

Although intervention is often associated with negative connotations, the UNSC is in a unique position to determine the form such intervention would take, including the

potential inclusion of military or economic measures. These could be pivotal in addressing the root causes of Venezuela's crisis but might also lead to conflict with Venezuelan forces, potentially exacerbating suffering rather than alleviating it.

Fundamentally, the UNSC has the choice of intervention in Venezuela, and has considerable resources at hand to deliver an effective response whilst tailoring it to the needs of the people it affects, as well as to those people effecting it.

The fulcrum of this issue, however, is whether or not such an intervention would meaningfully bring improvements to the situation at hand, or if it would permit the undermining presence of foreign powers that are unprepared to manage such an uncapitulating crises.