

The Venezuela Crisis JCC:
Cuba
Hawai'i Pacific Model United Nations
2019

Aloha and welcome to PacMUN 2019!

Our names are Jackie Osaki and Matt Linker and we are excited to return as Secretary General for PacMUN 2019. Throughout our involvement with PacMUN over the past three years, we have seen this conference grow and flourish. We are happy to say that trend continues this year as we host the largest and most dynamic PacMUN so far, with a variety of General Assembly, Specialized, Crisis, and Joint Crisis committees that tackle some of the most complex and urgent issues that have faced our world.

My name is Jackie and I'm a recent graduate of Stanford University with a BS with Honors in Biology and a BA in Comparative Literature. I currently work for a management and technology consulting firm that specializes in media and entertainment. Throughout my Stanford career, I participated in Model UN as a delegate, vice-captain, and eventually team captain in my last two years. I love being able to bring realism and current issues to Model UN for students to begin thinking about how we can solve the most pressing issues facing society today.

My name is Matt and I'm a 2019 Stanford graduate in Computer Science, and now work in equity derivatives trading and structuring at a major financial services firm. I first participated in MUN early in my own high school career, before rediscovering it my sophomore year at Stanford, eventually serving as vice-captain, captain, and on the board of our MUN team's parent organization, the Society for International Affairs at Stanford. To me, MUN represents a window into the true complexity of world affairs, and an excellent learning opportunity to understand why some challenges are more difficult to resolve than others.

While we are excited to bring what we believe to be the best PacMUN yet into fruition, we are most excited to see relationships continue to build this year. We strive to embody all of our core values, but it is truly special to see *laulima*, or collaboration, in action. We urge all delegates to keep *laulima* in mind to work together to innovate solutions and make new friends in the process. We hope this guide helps you jump start your research for this year's PacMUN and we look forward to seeing you in November!

Sincerely,

Jackie Osaki and Matt Linker

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Aloha mai!

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the Cuban committee of the JCC at PacMUN 2019! My name is Katie Sakys, and I am so excited to be chairing at PACMUN 2019 because I finally get to participate in Model UN at home! I graduated from Kamehameha Schools in 2016, but we didn't have much MUN up at Kapālama when I was there, so I didn't get involved in MUN until I went away to college at Harvard.

I am unequivocally excited to be your Chair for the Cabinet of Cuba. Challenging and thought-provoking, this committee will be an intense exploration of the Venezuelan crisis and the threats of domestic political crises on economic strength, human rights, and international diplomacy. Considering the importance of state sovereignty in today's political climate, I challenge you to question how much of a role foreign nations should play in Venezuela's political affairs. The challenge of the Cabinet of Cuba will be to determine how best to involve itself in the Venezuelan crisis while protecting Cuban interests in President Maduro's Venezuela and ensuring the political and human rights of the peoples living in Venezuela. There is no easy answer. That is why this issue is so intriguing to me, and I hope it is to you as well. You and your fellow delegates will be working to create and refine a solution to the crisis within Venezuela's borders and the proxy political war it has started between those nations supporting President Maduro and those nations supporting the opposition.

Before I get too carried away discussing what is sure to be an exciting committee, allow me to introduce myself as a human being rather than simply a Chair or a delegate. Travelling often as a child, my interest in the world was born at a young age. I was fortunate enough to grow up on the island of O'ahu in Hawai'i, a place where many cultures fused to create an extremely vibrant and special place in which to reside. My homeland infected me with a passion for food, art, music, and most importantly, learning about the world around me. Living at the Pacific crossroads of North America and East Asia solidified my interest in international relations and global interactions, which subsequently spurred a long career in speech and debate. With very little Model UN activity occurring on my little rock in the middle of the ocean, it wasn't until I arrived at Harvard that I was able to fuse my interest in global affairs and my passion for extemporaneous speaking and debate by joining Harvard's traveling MUN team. I instantaneously fell in love with the mission of Model UN encouraging, above all else, collaboration, diplomacy, and education.

Why do I still love Model UN? In a world riddled with disagreement and conflict, this activity develops our empathy, challenges our greatest ideas, and pushes young thinkers to tackle the greatest problems facing our world today, all while pushing us to work together rather than fight one another. I look forward to seeing unity and harmony reflected in you and your work in our committee, and I hope that you will learn new skills and acquire new friends along the way.

Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions — first and foremost I am here as a resource for you as you prepare for and participate in the conference. From the beginning to the end of our committee, my desire is that you have a substantive experience and an incredible time. I was thrown into my first MUN conference with very little understanding of Model UN and even less committee experience, and it made for a rather nerve-wracking experience. Thus it is especially important to me that both new and seasoned delegates feel welcome and enabled at PacMUN 2019. I will be here to support you every step of the way, from the minute you read this and begin researching to the moments after we pass our final directive following several long days of debate and diplomacy. Even if you do not have any questions for me, I encourage you to introduce yourself beyond the scope of a MUN delegate. In the meantime, I will look forward to meeting you this upcoming November.

Me ke aloha,
Katie K. Sakys

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the PACMUN JCC: Cuba. My name is Cameron McClellan and I am a third year Stanford undergraduate majoring in Management science and engineering. It will be my second time as a crisis director, and 5th time being a member of the crisis team and it will be my pleasure to direct the tides crises that are soon to make landfall on our committee. Of all the roles I have played in various MUN conferences from THIMUN to LAMUN, being a member of the crisis team is by far my favorite. I find that the pressure of needing to deal with realistic, historical events while trying to establish who your friends and enemies are and sowing the seeds of your personal strategy in your crisis notes tends to produce some of the most creative solutions to history's myriad of problems.

I got involved with MUN in my freshman year because I was passionate about 3 things: history, arguing, and acting. There exists no other activity in which the three are combined so creatively. History is almost constantly being simplified. Its great decisions boiled down to only a few factors because the reality is that each nation's government or each individual privy to one of these great past debates had so many unique and particular influences that to try to make sense of all of them in aggregate is just too hard. Instead, MUN allows us to embody one of these individuals in such a way that we might finally gain an insight into what it truly takes to negotiate a peace between nations or establish a democratic government after a revolution. And while that might seem rather academic and daunting, in MUN and particularly in crisis, you will discover that these debates are made or broken on their creativity and often even their theatricality. I look forward to seeing your solutions this coming conference.

Cameron McClellan

Introduction to Committee

At PacMUN 2019, the Joint Crisis Committees (JCC's) will be focusing on the topic of "The Venezuela Crisis," arguably the most severe economic crisis of the modern age, with far-reaching political and humanitarian impacts. The JCC universe this year is comprised of 4 committees representing the various governments of Colombia, The Republic of Cuba, the Russian Federation, and the United States. Similar to a normal crisis committee, delegates in JCC's will have the power to utilize crisis notes which can potentially impact the JCC: Cuba committee, as well as any of the other adjoined committees. Delegates will also be challenged to deal with crises prepared by the Crisis Director and their staff, as well as any crises involving the US that arise from other JCC's.

This committee will simulate the discussions and negotiations which occur in the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Cuba, more commonly referred to as the Cabinet of Cuba. All delegates will be representing high-ranking government officials who have the power and influence to direct the Cuban government in its endeavors to address the ongoing crisis in Venezuela. As your chair, I will embody the current Cuban President, Miguel Díaz-Canel. It is this committee's job to advise me, as best as possible, on how to proceed. However, as Miguel Díaz-Canel, I stress that I reserve the right to exercise my executive power. Although I value a wide variety of perspectives and opinions, I may retract your privilege of partaking in the discussion should I sense any disloyalty to the nation amongst the Cabinet of Cuba.

Because the crisis in Venezuela is an ongoing, present-day issue, I encourage all delegates to take advantage of news articles for the most current, up-to-date information on the situation in Venezuela and Cuba's position. Besides thoroughly reading this background guide, delegates should conduct their own research on their roles and specific policies and goals they plan to pursue. To aid you in this process, I have created a "Helpful Resources" section with articles and videos I suggest you utilize. Should you require any additional assistance with your research process, please email me. I am extremely passionate about Model UN and education, so I am more than happy to assist you with your learning process.

Although PacMUN is held in Hawai'i, I understand that each of you comes to Honolulu from varying academic and cultural backgrounds. Model UN can vary greatly between schools, states, and countries. If any part of the aforementioned introduction or committee structure is

confusing or unfamiliar to you, please reach out to me before or during the conference, and I will do all that I can to assist you. I'd also like to stress the importance of collaboration and diplomacy in Model UN. As a chair, I value friendly collaboration and respectful diplomacy above all else.

The purpose of Model UN is to provide an interactive educational experience that teaches in an interesting and enjoyable way about the United Nations and international affairs. The process of debating under parliamentary procedure affords delegates a means of understanding how the process of international debate and negotiation which we commonly call "diplomacy" functions. The simulation of the diplomatic processes are especially important in this international crisis that is unfolding before our very eyes. In our interdependent world, Model UN makes informed global citizens who not only understand the decisions their country makes but also how those decisions reached through collaboration and diplomacy are often the most effective. Thus, I would like to remind all delegates to understand each other's personal differences and maintain a sense of respect for your fellow delegates throughout the weekend. I encourage you to bring any disrespectful behavior or dialogue you may encounter during the conference to my attention. I will deal with these situations as necessary in order to maintain a safe learning environment for all delegates.

Historical Background

Between 1998 and 2013, President Hugo Chavez and the United Socialist Party presided over Venezuelan politics.¹ A series of economic policies, including price controls, social programs, and expanded public services, centralized Chavez' political power and increased the role of the government in the economy.² Although poverty rates decreased, while public health, literacy rates, and quality of life all improved, these achievements changed course in the wake of the 2008 global financial crisis.³ Through the early 2010s, poverty rates increased once again and past public spending would prove unsustainable.⁴

The Economic Crisis

In late 2014, a year after the death of President Chavez, oil prices collapsed and set Venezuela's oil-dependent economy on a downward spiral. Over the course of twelve months, GDP shrunk by nearly 6% and inflation rose dramatically.⁵ Without oil revenue, and with little saved from an oil boom in the early 2000s, President Maduro closed off import markets and used national reserves to cover foreign debt payments.⁶ Without imports, food and medicine shortages began to set in.⁷ Local producers struggled to meet demand due to decades of underdevelopment and new government policies that slashed farmers' profit margins, prevented imports of farming materials and equipment, and mismanaged property distribution.⁸ Government currency controls, intended to prevent an outward flow of capital, resulted in an inflationary conflict with the currency

¹ "Venezuela Crisis in 300 Words," BBC News, May 1, 2019. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-48121148>

² Charlie Devereux and Raymond Colitt, "Venezuelans' Quality of Life Improved in UN Index Under Chavez," Bloomberg L.P. March 9, 2013. <https://web.archive.org/web/20141107050220/http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-03-07/venezuelans-quality-of-life-improved-in-un-index-under-chavez.html>

³ Juan Cristóbal Nagel, "Poverty Shoots Up in Venezuela," *Foreign Policy*. June 4, 2014.

⁴ "Venezuela Crisis in 300 Words," BBC News, May 1, 2019. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-48121148>

⁵ Dominic Bailey et al., "Venezuela: All you need to know about the crisis in nine charts," BBC News, February 4, 2019. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-46999668>

⁶ Mercy Benzaquen, "How food in Venezuela went from subsidized to scarce," *The New York Times*, July 16, 2017. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/07/16/world/americas/venezuela-shortages.html>

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

black market. Even though Venezuela possesses the largest known oil reserves in the world, oil production continued to decrease in response to weak revenues, decreased investment and weakened trade ties.⁹ Inflation soon turned to hyperinflation; by the end of 2018, prices of common goods were doubling every 19 days.¹⁰ The International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimates that by the end of 2019, at current rates, Venezuela's inflation rate will hit an incomparable 10 million percent.¹¹

Arguably the biggest problem facing Venezuelans in their day-to-day lives is hyperinflation. The annual inflation rate reached 1,300,000% in the 12 months to November 2018, according to a study by the National Assembly. By the end of 2018, prices were doubling every 19 days on average. This has left many Venezuelans struggling to afford basic items such as food and toiletries. The price of a cup of coffee in the capital Caracas doubled to 400 bolivars (\$0.62; £0.50) in the space of just a week last December.¹² Roughly four million Venezuelans have left the country since 2014 when the economic crisis started to bite. However, Vice-President Delcy Rodríguez has disputed the figures, arguing they are inflated by opposing countries trying to justify a military intervention. The majority of those Venezuelans leaving the country have crossed into neighboring Colombia, from where some move on to Ecuador, Peru and Chile. Others have gone south to Brazil. The mass migration is one of the largest forced displacements in the western hemisphere in recent history.

The Political Crisis

As economic conditions worsened, the opposition party to President Maduro garnered popular support around the country and won a two-thirds supermajority in the 2015 national assembly elections.¹³ In what critics called a protective response, Maduro appointed a number of his associates to the Supreme Court. These justices blocked a handful of opposition lawmakers

⁹ Kathryn Reid, "Venezuela Crisis: Facts, FAQs, and How to Help," World Vision, April 30, 2019.

<https://www.worldvision.org/disaster-relief-news-stories/venezuela-crisis-facts>

¹⁰ Dominic Bailey et al., "Venezuela: All you need to know about the crisis in nine charts," BBC News, February 4, 2019. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-46999668>

¹¹ Reid, "Venezuela Crisis: Facts, FAQs, and How to Help."

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Rahima Nasa, "Timeline: How the Crisis in Venezuela Unfolded," PBS News, February 22, 2019. <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/timeline-how-the-crisis-in-venezuela-unfolded/>

from assuming assembly positions and banned an opposition leader from running in 2017.¹⁴ Mass demonstrations broke out against the court's decision that lasted for months and left 66 protestors dead.¹⁵ A new, rival branch of government endorsed by Maduro, the "Constituent Assembly," was elected that Spring and granted powers superseding those of the National Assembly.¹⁶ The U.S., Canada, and a number of neighboring Latin American countries did not recognize the legislative body as legitimate due to suspicions of a rigged election.¹⁷ The U.S. labeled the Venezuelan presidential elections the following year as similarly illegitimate and undemocratic before they had even taken place; despite these accusations of foul play, Maduro was reelected on May 20, 2018.¹⁸

Protests broke out once again just days after Maduro's January 2019 inauguration. Protestors called attention to his shocking 68% victory margin as fraudulent and decried the deteriorating economic situation.¹⁹ Juan Guaidó, President of the National Assembly and popular opposition leader, declared himself president according to emergency constitutional powers.²⁰ Tension has been mounting ever since January 23, when Mr. Guaidó declared himself acting president and said he would assume the powers of the executive branch from there onwards. The move was a direct challenge to the power of President Maduro, who had been sworn in to a second six-year term in office just two weeks previously. Unsurprisingly, President Maduro did not take kindly to his rival's move, which he condemned as a ploy by the US to oust him. Maduro emphatically stated he was the constitutional president and would remain so. Following the United State's decision to acknowledge Guaidó as the legitimate Venezuelan leader, Maduro declared an end to diplomatic relations and blocked American humanitarian aid from crossing into Venezuela on February 8.²¹ These developments incited Maduro to close the Venezuelan-Brazilian border, which in turn led to violent skirmishes and civilian deaths. On February 21, American President

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ "Venezuela Crisis in 300 Words," BBC News.

¹⁷ Nasa, "Timeline: How the Crisis in Venezuela Unfolded."

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ana Vanessa Herrero and Megan Specia, "Venezuela is in Crisis. So How did Maduro Secure a Second Term?" *The New York Times*, January 10, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/10/world/americas/venezuela-maduro-inauguration.html>

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

Donald Trump issued an ultimatum to the Venezuelan military; reject Maduro and accept Guaidó as president, or “lose everything.”²²

Who is the President?

This would be an unusual question to ask in most countries, but in Venezuela many want to know exactly that as the government accused opposition leader Juan Guaidó of trying to topple President Maduro. The accusation came after Mr. Guaidó - surrounded by a group of men in uniforms - called on the military to switch sides. On April 30, 2019, Mr. Guaidó asked security forces to aid him in the “final phase” required to remove Maduro from power, which Maduro’s government labeled “an attempted coup.”²³ As of July 2019, however, the Venezuelan military has not slackened its support for Maduro and the political stand-off persists.

Why is the Political Crisis Coming to a Head Now?

After being re-elected, Mr. Maduro announced he would serve out his remaining first term and only then be sworn in for a second term on January 10. It was following his swearing-in ceremony that the opposition to his government was given a fresh boost. The National Assembly argues that because the election was not fair, Mr. Maduro is a "usurper" and the presidency is vacant. This is a line that is being pushed in particular by Mr. Guaidó. Citing articles 233 and 333 of Venezuela's constitution, the legislature says that in such cases, the head of the National Assembly takes over as acting president. That is why Mr Guaidó declared himself acting president on January 23. Since then, he has been organizing mass protests and calling on the military to switch allegiance.

How has the International Community Reacted?

More than 50 countries have recognized Guaidó as the legitimate president, among them the United States and many nations in Latin America. However, China, Cuba, and the Russian Federation, among others, have stood by President Maduro. Within Venezuela, those opposed to the government celebrated Mr Guaidó's move, while government officials said they would defend

²² Ibid.

²³ “Venezuela Crisis in 300 Words,” BBC News.

the president against imperialist threats. Though Mr. Guaidó counts on the support of many international leaders, he does not have much power in practical terms. The Venezuelan National Assembly was largely rendered powerless by the creation of the National Constituent Assembly in 2017, which is exclusively made up of government loyalists. The National Assembly has continued to meet, but its decisions have been ignored by President Maduro in favor of those made by the National Constituent Assembly.

What Will Break the Impasse?

Security forces seem to be the key player in this crisis. So far, they have been loyal to President Maduro, who has rewarded them with frequent pay rises and put high-ranking military men in control of key posts and industries. Guaidó has promised all security forces personnel an amnesty if they break ties with President Maduro. On April 30, Guaidó published a video on Twitter in which he again called on the military to switch sides. The footage showed him surrounded by a group of men in uniforms in a location near La Carlota air base. He said he had the support of the military and announced the beginning of the "final phase" of his takeover of power. But Defense Minister Vladimir Padrino said all military bases remained under government control and were operating normally.

In May, representatives from the government and the opposition met in Norway for exploratory talks on how to resolve the crisis. The talks were later moved to Barbados but, on August 7, President Maduro ordered his representatives to pull out of the talks. His decision came just days after the United States had imposed sweeping sanctions on Venezuela, including a freeze on all Venezuelan government assets in the United States and a bar on transactions with his government. President Maduro called the move a “grave and brutal aggression”²⁴ and said he would not negotiate with the opposition, which he attacked for backing the sanctions.

²⁴ Ibid.

Key Players

The Maduro Administration

Led by Nicolas Maduro, the current Maduro administration is responsible for the continuance of the economic and humanitarian crisis in Venezuela due to its ability to remain united. Despite pressure from the Venezuelan people and international community, Maduro remains in power due to his staunch political and military supporters who have been put into position through Maduro's effective bribery and blackmail system: his supporters have access to an exclusive bolivar/dollar exchange rate, and those who do not support his regime are immediately flushed out of the political system²⁵. However, international sanctions have been imposed on high ranking Venezuelan officials in order to break unity and weaken internal alliances.²⁶ In addition, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has accused Maduro of preparing to flee to Cuba, only convinced not to do so by Russia. Maduro has vehemently denied this accusation.

The Opposition Coalition

Led by Juan Guaido, the head of the National Assembly, the opposition to Maduro's regime has been working to gain the legitimacy to take over as Venezuela's ruling entity. After Maduro's questionable 2018 re-election, Guaido declared himself interim president on the constitutional basis that allows for the head of the National Assembly to become Venezuela's interim leader in the absence of a President.²⁷ Subsequently, the Democratic Unity Roundtable or Mesa de la Unidad Democratica (MUD) formed a parallel government to Maduro's, supported by the Venezuelan people.²⁸ Guaido has gained a significant amount of support from the international community, with the US, EU, and most Latin American governments in support of the overthrow of Maduro.

²⁵ Rodriguez, Felix Seijas. "The Six Players in Venezuela's Crisis." *Americas Quarterly*. July 28, 2017. Accessed August 14, 2019. <https://www.americasquarterly.org/content/six-players-venezuelas-crisis>.

²⁶ Rogers, Katie. "Trump, Seeking to Put Pressure on Maduro, Threatens a Full Embargo on Cuba." *The New York Times*. May 01, 2019. Accessed August 14, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/30/us/politics/trump-maduro-cuba.html?module=inline>.

²⁷ Fisher, Max. "Who Is Venezuela's Legitimate President? A Messy Dispute, Explained." *The New York Times*. February 05, 2019. Accessed August 14, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/04/world/americas/venezuela-maduro-guaido-legitimate.html>.

²⁸ *Ibid*.

However, Guaido must rally enough dissidents, including members of the Maduro regime, in order to legitimize his position through a popular mandate.

The Venezuelan National Armed Force (FAN)

Comprised of over 500,000 troops and veteran military officers loyal to Maduro, the Venezuelan military is one of the key factors in determining the fate of the nation.²⁹ FAN is currently responsible for controlling riots and protests, as well as prohibiting foreign humanitarian aid from entering the country. In the case of a foreign invasion, the Venezuelan military would be directly involved in the fighting. Within the 38% of Maduro's cabinet who are retired or active military officers, corruption is widespread as Maduro's followers exploit the natural resources, food, and economy of Venezuela.³⁰ Depending on Maduro's ability to sustain the military's loyalty and Guaido's ability to win over enough defectors to the opposition, the military has the power to tip the scales in either leader's favor.

The Venezuelan People

Although the Venezuelan people have been largely ignored by the Maduro government, widespread riots and protests have emphasized the impact that the Venezuelan people can have on the stability of the nation and legitimacy of the government. Angered by food shortages, a lack of public services, and worsening health conditions, hundreds of thousands of Venezuelans have taken to the streets to protest their discontentment with the government. This has not only put pressure on Maduro, but also gained the attention of the international community.³¹ The opinions of the Venezuelan people have the power to legitimize Guaido's claim to the presidency, and potentially drive Maduro out of a position of authority.

²⁹ Rodriguez, Felix Seijas. "The Six Players in Venezuela's Crisis." *Americas Quarterly*. July 28, 2017. Accessed August 14, 2019. <https://www.americasquarterly.org/content/six-players-venezuelas-crisis>.

³⁰ McDonnell, Patrick J., David S. Cloud, Chris Kaul, and Mery Mogollon. "In Venezuela Right Now, One Constituency Matters Most: The Military." *Los Angeles Times*. May 01, 2019. Accessed August 14, 2019. <https://www.latimes.com/world/mexico-americas/la-fg-venezuela-military-20190501-story.html>.

³¹ Rodriguez, Felix Seijas. "The Six Players in Venezuela's Crisis." *Americas Quarterly*. July 28, 2017. Accessed August 14, 2019. <https://www.americasquarterly.org/content/six-players-venezuelas-crisis>.

The National Assembly & Constituent Assembly

First elected in 2000, the National Assembly is a unicameral body made up of elected members based on a proportional representation system.³² After facing opposition from the assembly, Maduro formed the Constituent Assembly in 2017, comprised of his primary supporters, with the intent to re-write the Venezuelan constitution to his benefit.³³ Many Venezuelans and foreign states have denied the legitimacy of the Constituent Assembly, refusing to recognize the votes or decisions originating from the newly created body. Feeling threatened by the rise of an opposition government, Maduro has been planning to dissolve the Guaido-run National Assembly and hold new legislative elections, despite the fact that the next parliamentary elections are not scheduled until December 2020.³⁴ The rivalry between the National Assembly and the Constituent Assembly has the potential to deepen the conflict between Maduro and the opposition, with tensions rising on both sides.

³² McCoy, Jennifer L. "Venezuela's Controversial New Constituent Assembly, Explained." *The Washington Post*. August 01, 2017. Accessed August 14, 2019. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/08/01/venezuelas-dubious-new-constituent-assembly-explained/>.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Armas, Mayela, and Brian Ellsworth. "Venezuela's Guaido Says Government Plans to Dissolve Opposition-run..." *Reuters*. August 12, 2019. Accessed August 14, 2019. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-venezuela-politics/venezuelas-guaido-says-government-plans-to-dissolve-opposition-run-legislature-idUSKCN1V204G>.

Regional Impacts

As a result of the ongoing crisis, the Venezuelan people have been struggling to maintain economic stability and a secure way of life in the conflict-riddled South American country. Although Venezuela contains the world's largest oil reserves, due to Chavez's unrestricted spending up until his death in 2013, the country is now stricken with hyperinflation.³⁵ Despite the people's support of Chavez's populist messages and social welfare programs, Venezuelans are now facing a bigger challenge following this brief period of improvement.

Economic Effects

Due to Chavez's precarious oil-reliant economy and unsustainable social welfare system, the national economy has been facing a plethora of negative consequences after oil prices plummeted in 2014. Subsequent to Maduro's succession of Chavez, Venezuela's GDP has fallen 35%, which is a sharper drop than the one seen in the USA's Great Depression.³⁶ Economists say that Venezuela's fall is the "single largest economic collapse outside of war in at least 45 years."³⁷

With the fall of the country's economy, armed gangs have been dominating entire towns, public services have been rendered useless, and the purchasing power of most Venezuelans is practically worthless. By the end of 2019, Venezuela's GDP is predicted to have shrunk 62% since 2013.³⁸ In addition, Maduro has rigged the Venezuelan economy to keep himself in power by exploiting the currency system: the official exchange rate is 10 bolivars per US dollar, but only a select few have access to this rate. The Venezuelan currency has become virtually worthless, as most individuals are forced to get their dollars on the black market, where the exchange rate is 21,051.03 bolivars per US dollar.³⁹

³⁵ Vox. "The Collapse of Venezuela, Explained." YouTube. August 25, 2017. Accessed August 14, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S1gUR8wM5vA&list=PLa9nXFptFwgD6BqH4nKS95gXRteJRzF4F&index=2&t=347s>.

³⁶ Vox. "The Collapse of Venezuela, Explained." YouTube. August 25, 2017. Accessed August 14, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S1gUR8wM5vA&list=PLa9nXFptFwgD6BqH4nKS95gXRteJRzF4F&index=2&t=347s>.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ "Noticias De Venezuela y Dolar Paralelo." *DolarToday*, <https://dolartoday.com/>.

Social Effects

Currently, food and medicine is unaffordable for about 82% of the population and Venezuela has the 3rd highest rate of murder in the world.⁴⁰ Many businesses have plummeted in sales and merchants and marketplace vendors are forced to accept worthless bills which decrease in value everyday.⁴¹ Venezuela's livestock industry, which once flourished, is now on the brink of extinction with most people unable to afford meat, and the few surviving ranchers being forced to hand over their cattle to armed gangs.⁴² Maracaibo, has been facing sporadic power outages, with electricity blackouts worsening water and gasoline shortages and resulting in towns and villages losing cell-phone coverage.⁴³ Basic public services such as hospitals and banks are no longer functioning due to a lack of funds.

As a result of these issues, there has been a significant increase in mass demonstrations and protests in Venezuela. In 2017, an unprecedented number of 9,787 protests occurred throughout the country, with a large majority of these protests demanding social and economic improvements such as labor rights, access to food, medication, and healthcare, and more.⁴⁴ However, these protests received little attention from the media and government, with state authorities infringing upon the people's right to peaceful assembly through the use of excessive force and arbitrary detentions.

Humanitarian Effects

According to estimates from the United Nations, approximately 25% of Venezuelans are in need of humanitarian assistance, with millions of people lacking access to food and basic services.⁴⁵ Reports from various U.N. agencies and the Red Cross estimate 94% of the 28.8 million

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Kurmanaev, Anatoly. "Venezuela's Collapse Is the Worst Outside of War in Decades, Economists Say." The New York Times. May 17, 2019. Accessed August 14, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/17/world/americas/venezuela-economy.html>.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ "Venezuela Crisis: Facts, FAQs, and How to Help." World Vision. July 13, 2019. Accessed August 14, 2019. <https://www.worldvision.org/disaster-relief-news-stories/venezuela-crisis-facts>.

⁴⁵ Nichols, Michelle. "Venezuelans Facing Unprecedented Challenges, Many Need Aid -..." Reuters. March 29, 2019. Accessed August 14, 2019. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-venezuela-politics-un/venezuelans-facing-unprecedented-challenges-many-need-aid-internal-u-n-report-idUSKCN1R92AG>.

people residing in Venezuela live in poverty.⁴⁶ This does not include the 3.4 million people who have fled the country, due to Venezuela's insecure economy and political unrest.⁴⁷ Around 300,000 people's lives are at risk due to a lack of access to medicines or treatment for diseases such as cancer, diabetes, and HIV, while an estimated 2.8 million people are in need of healthcare.⁴⁸ Diseases such as tuberculosis, diphtheria, measles, malaria, and hepatitis A are on the rise in Venezuela, due to the lack of access to clean drinking water, and 4.3 million people are in need of improved sanitation and hygiene conditions.⁴⁹ 1.9 million people are in need of nutrition due to a shortage of food, while 1.2 million children are unable to attend school as many families cannot afford school supplies, clothing, and transportation.⁵⁰

However, Maduro has insisted that there is no need for humanitarian aid, rather blaming the United States' sanctions as the cause of the country's problems. In April 2019, Venezuelan government troops prohibited aid convoys backed by the US from entering Colombia and Brazil, while conversely accepting aid from its ally, Russia.⁵¹ On this matter, the United Nations has stated, "The politicization of humanitarian assistance in the context of the crisis makes delivery of assistance in accordance with the principles of neutrality, impartiality, and independence more difficult."⁵²

In addition to the internal humanitarian crisis, Venezuela is facing Latin America's biggest refugee crisis to date. In the past two years, Venezuela has lost over 10% of its population with millions fleeing the country for nearby nations such as Colombia, Peru, Chile, Ecuador, Brazil, Spain, and more. The number of displaced Venezuelan people is only increasing, and estimated to reach 5.4 million individuals by the end of 2019.⁵³

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Nichols, Michelle. "Venezuelans Facing Unprecedented Challenges, Many Need Aid -..." Reuters. March 29, 2019. Accessed August 14, 2019. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-venezuela-politics-un/venezuelans-facing-unprecedented-challenges-many-need-aid-internal-u-n-report-idUSKCN1R92AG>.

⁵³ "Venezuela Crisis: Facts, FAQs, and How to Help." World Vision. July 13, 2019. Accessed August 14, 2019. <https://www.worldvision.org/disaster-relief-news-stories/venezuela-crisis-facts>.

Cuba's Involvement in Venezuela

Much has been said about the behavior of Venezuela's Bolivarian regime, its evolving character, its dramatic economic mismanagement, and the impact it has projected throughout the American hemisphere, including its bilateral ties to Cuba. At a first glance, it would seem that – based on classical international relations scholarship referents when it comes to assessing national power such as population, territory, natural resources, and sheer economic size – Venezuela is the senior partner. Yet a crucial factor is missing to examine how the balance of power truly works in the dynamic framework of said bilateral relation.

Beyond the evident ideological, political, and diplomatic affinities between the rulers of both countries, the crucial factor that has been overlooked even by most experts is the strong presence and operational intensity of Cuban intelligence agencies in Venezuela. A different picture – one that challenges conventional wisdom – might emerge when one considers this angle.

Such a topic is important considering its deep geopolitical implications. It also raises pertinent questions: What if Venezuela is not necessarily the senior partner after all? The fact that it has not been addressed is perhaps a result of the intrinsically covert nature of intelligence activities. Moreover, both regimes are not precisely known for their compliance with basic transparency standards. In practice, that means relevant and reliable information about it is notoriously scarce. Nevertheless, the analysis of what open sources provide is useful to elaborate a more or less accurate – yet broad – situational assessment.

Profile of Cuban Intelligence Services

According to conventional wisdom, effective foreign intelligence capabilities are usually associated with great powers. The American CIA, the British MI6, the Israeli Mossad, the Russian SVR and the like often come to mind whenever the term is mentioned. Of course, such perception is hardly unjustified. In contrast, Cuba is certainly far from being a great power, yet the reach of its intelligence services must not be underestimated.

The Cuban Intelligence Directorate – known as G2 – was initially trained by the Soviet KGB and the Stasi, the East German Ministry of State Security, the strongest intelligence agencies of the Socialist bloc during the Cold War. Moreover, the resilience that has played a key role in the survival of the Cuban communist regime for six decades can be at least partially attributed to

its intelligence services' abilities to monitor internal dissent, consolidate political rule, and keep at bay external rivals. It is even said that Fidel Castro himself was the target of hundreds of unsuccessful assassination attempts. It is known that the Cuban intelligence community recruits promising college students, especially from social science programs. Its training and methods are based on the development of professionalism rather than improvisation, unlike other Latin American intelligence agencies. Furthermore, a heavy ideological ingredient promotes a strong morale.

Another aspect worth emphasizing is that Cuban intelligence has not just assumed a defensive position. Actually, it has been remarkably active abroad for decades. For instance, it supported several Marxist insurgencies in Central and South America during the Cold War. It has also managed to infiltrate US national security agencies and Cuban American political groups hostile to Havana's socialist regime.

Last but not least, Cuban intelligence supported the military involvement of the country's armed forces in extra-regional operational theatres such as Angola, Vietnam, and even the Middle East during the Yom Kippur War. In short, despite Cuba's structural limitations – including its precarious economy – the country's intelligence services represent a big asset in terms of power projection. In effect, they need to be understood as a substantial force multiplier.

Precedents of Cuban Interests in Venezuela

The interest of Cuba in Venezuela is not new. Aside from cultural common denominators and geographic proximity, Venezuela's energy resources are attractive from Havana's perspective. Additionally, it is important to note that Venezuela was precisely the first country that Fidel Castro visited after having overthrown Fulgencio Batista. Nevertheless, a Cuban request for economic assistance was rejected by Caracas. Other unconventional measures were implemented thereafter. In fact, Cuban military and intelligence personnel backed two forcible attempts to provoke regime change in Caracas through the instigation of an armed popular uprising. Both were ultimately neutralized by Venezuelan armed forces. These incidents surely must have shaped the perception of Venezuelan generals, admirals, and senior intelligence cadres: the Cuban government was acting as a direct threat to Venezuela's national security.

Decades later, changing circumstances in global geopolitics rekindled Cuban strategic interests in Venezuela. In other words, the collapse of the Soviet Union left Cuba without reliable geopolitical patronage and also without generous economic support. The most pressing concern for Havana was that its energy security – which until then had been covered by Moscow under favorable conditions – was now at stake. A “special period” of severe budgetary restrictions had to be applied. Nevertheless, prolonged economic distress could endanger the political survival of the Castro regime. Hence, a solution needed to be found and preferably before discontent could fuel unrest or worse.

The surprise coup attempt launched by Venezuelan Colonel Hugo Chavez back in 1992 was a major political earthquake, even though it did not produce its intended outcome. In his quest to find political support for his so called Bolivarian movement, Chavez visited Havana and was euphorically received by Fidel Castro himself, even though he had voiced support for the then sitting Venezuelan President Carlos Andrés Pérez, the leader Chavez intended to remove from power.

While Chavez was likely only feeding his charismatic ascent to political stardom, the Cuban ruler – guided by foresight – must have perceived a valuable strategic opportunity. Hence, the Cuban state started investing in the career of an ideological friend that one day could reach an important position. In contrast, Chavez apparently started viewing Castro as some sort of mentor. There might have been a genuine mutual sympathy between them but geopolitics is ultimately ruled by impersonal forces. That was certainly clear in Havana but it is debatable if the same vision prevailed in Caracas.

Indeed, once Chavez became president several years later, bilateral ties to Cuba were significantly strengthened. The Bolivarian regime started providing economic support for Havana, including the supply of oil under very privileged conditions, even though the global price of oil was sharply rising back then. Thus, Chavez can be regarded as the economic savior of the Cuban revolutionary regime. Whether he was aware of that or whether he was instead playing that role rather unwittingly is hard to determine but the dictates of political realism indicate it is a possibility that cannot be dismissed. In exchange for the generous Venezuelan backing, Cuba began sending doctors, sport trainers, technicians, and engineers to Venezuela. Needless to say, the arrival of Cuban personnel to Venezuela provided an ideal cover in which to place intelligence operatives.

Turning Points and Increasing Presence

However, the increasingly radical and intransigent position assumed by the Bolivarian government alienated several sectors of Venezuelan society, including the middle classes, the local business community, and – more importantly – some factions of the country’s top military echelons and the intelligence apparatus, who were deeply distrustful of Cuban influence because of the aforementioned historical precedents. Maybe such suspicions were not unsubstantiated after all.

This motivated an attempt to remove Chavez from power. The coup ultimately failed but, during critical hours, opposition forces surrounded the Cuban embassy and the leaders that briefly assumed power decided to interrupt the flow of Venezuelan oil to Cuba. What matters is that direct Cuban influence – either overt or clandestine – was already an acknowledged political reality by all relevant stakeholders. The Bolivarian government was promptly restored thanks to a superior coordination in terms of mobilization and, motivated by a revanchist agenda, embraced even more uncompromising positions. In this context of growing polarization, a major turning point took place: The Cuban presence in Venezuela’s strategic circles was enhanced.

Cuban military personnel started arriving at Venezuelan bases. A new military doctrine – similar to that of Havana – was adopted. Ideological and military training was now imparted by Cuban instructors. Furthermore, with the assistance of Cuban agents, the Venezuelan intelligence community – including both its civilian and military branches – was remodeled and purged of officials deemed ‘counterrevolutionary.’ It has even been claimed that Cuban specialists were active in the Venezuelan presidential situation room, involved in tasks related to protecting the regime and monitoring relevant political developments.

It can be argued that, in his paranoia, Chavez considered that he had no choice but to turn to his Cuban allies now that he no longer trusted many Venezuelan governmental sectors. In contrast, the Cubans harnessed this situation as an opportunity to augment their degree of strategic influence in the most critical sectors and nerve centers of the Venezuelan state. Shortly afterwards, there were Cuban “advisers” in several Venezuelan embassies and ministries. The ruling Bolivarian elite received Cuban bodyguards and doctors. In contrast, the Venezuelan military presence in Cuba was negligible since all it entailed was an attaché office. In other words, the

strategic relation – in matters of security, intelligence and military affairs – had become profoundly asymmetric, to say the least.

Some analysts might describe this situation as some form of ‘occupation’, considering that Cuban presence in Venezuela had reached decisive proportions, even though Havana had not even fired a single shot. The Cubans were not just influential; they were now prominently involved in the decision-making process at the highest levels. As a result of a political miscalculation by Chavez and his closest collaborators, Venezuelan national sovereignty may have been compromised to a significant degree.

Other revealing facts include the Cuban role in the conformation of the paramilitary cells called ‘Bolivarian circles,’ groups of armed civilian militias responsible for protecting the Chavez regime and intimidating his opponents as well as in the implementation of draconian measures of social control, such as the connection between the issuance of official IDs and the introduction of pervasive digital surveillance systems.

Concerning foreign policy, Caracas started replicating Havana’s geopolitical alignments. Venezuela became a close ally of Eurasian powers hostile to US interests – mainly Russia, China, and Iran – and even non-state actors like the FARC Marxist guerrillas and the Shiite militant group Hezbollah. Moreover, Venezuela started purchasing Russian weapons and military hardware. Tellingly, even the prospect of a hypothetical confederation to formally unite Cuba and Venezuela was also discussed, the underlying assumption of which would be the perception that the national interests of both countries were to be seen as identical regardless of whether that was politically and strategically valid.

The Maduro Regime

When Hugo Chavez was diagnosed with cancer, he was treated by Cuban doctors in Havana. In fact, whereas Venezuelans – including members of the Bolivarian ruling elite – were kept in the dark, his condition was hermetically handled as a Cuban state secret. Understandably, the Cubans were worried that a power struggle over succession in Caracas might be detrimental to Havana’s national interests. However, it is impossible to ascertain the extent of the role played by the Cubans in the selection of Nicolas Maduro. His Castroist ideological formation, his lack of a charismatic leadership comparable to that of his predecessor, and his background as a militant

rather than as a career politician – let alone a statesman – raise reasonable doubts, especially considering Cuban intelligence might have regarded him as somebody that could be easily manipulated.

Eventually, the steep decline of global oil prices and the subsequent collapse of the Venezuelan economy, due to both erratic policies – likely motivated by ideological reasons rather than pragmatic decisions – and to a rampant kleptocracy (a government led by corrupt individuals who often use political influence to exploit the people and natural resources of their own territory in the interest of their own personal wealth and political powers), started fueling increasing socio-political tensions. As a result, the Venezuelan intelligence apparatus began using heavy-handed tactics to retain control. Furthermore, there were also external difficulties, since the Bolivarian continental axis was weakened due to successive political defeats.

With the demise of Fidel Castro in 2016 and the uncertain fate of Venezuela, Cuba proceeded to normalize diplomatic relations with the United States under Barack Obama's administration. It was a desperate move, because it revealed that the Cubans at some point thought that Venezuela could escape Havana's geopolitical gravitational pull. Therefore, their geopolitical bets had to be hedged. It would have been utterly unwise not to. Nevertheless, the Maduro regime has proved to be highly resilient, even though it has faced both international isolation and growing political challenges at home. Of course, the support of the Venezuelan armed forces and the instrumental use of the country's intelligence apparatus as a repressive tool have been determinant.

Moreover, the role of Cuban intelligence services cannot be neglected. If anything, their presence is more conspicuous than ever before. Maduro himself is completely surrounded by Cuban advisers, agents and staffers. Perhaps not surprisingly, Venezuela still provides cheap oil to Cuba – approximately 100 thousand daily barrels – even though its domestic economic situation is dire to say the least, based on indicators like GDP contraction, hyperinflation and widespread unavailability of food. Interestingly, according to eyewitness accounts, in a probable attempt to take advantage of his superstitious streak, his immediate entourage even includes Cuban witch doctors who practice Santería, a syncretic Afro-Cuban esoteric religion. As any seasoned intelligence will discern, perhaps the substantial role those priests play is more worldly than spiritual. It would hardly be the first time that religion is used as a conduit to undertake espionage.

Looking Ahead

It is difficult to forecast how the bilateral relation will behave in a foreseeable future. However, several scenarios need to be envisaged, along with their implications for the field of intelligence. Hence, the following possibilities need to be taken into account:

Continuity of the status quo: In the case, Maduro – or someone like him – stays in power, Cuban influence would remain rock-solid. Also, Caracas could receive stronger support from great powers like Russia and China, who happen to be geopolitical allies of Havana. This is of course the best-case scenario for Cuban intelligence.

Negotiated political transition: A deal between Maduro and his opponents as the only way to overcome the Venezuelan crisis should not be discarded. In this case, Maduro would peacefully agree to go into exile – probably to Havana – in exchange for immunity from legal prosecution and the unmolested conservation of his personal wealth. Since the outcome is not entirely clear, this would open Pandora’s box for Cuban intelligence. Their influence would be compromised if the next Venezuelan government does not share the Bolivarian agenda. In this case, Cuban intelligence operatives would fiercely fight to preserve the degree of influence they have achieved. In other words, they would become an actor in the ensuing power struggle and it would be naïve not to expect the intervention of other intelligence agencies.

Sudden disruption: The abrupt end of the Maduro regime could materialize if a successful coup takes place, a political assassination is carried, out or if a bloody civil war erupts. This would certainly be a big game changer and the consequences for Cuban intelligence would be more than challenging. In case a purge is conducted, its agents might find themselves evicted but, if a conflict breaks out, the Cubans will also be engulfed and the G2 will have no choice but to get involved. If their influential position is lost, it would be a severe setback for Havana’s geopolitical agenda. It would need to seek another benefactor if its Venezuelan satellite is gone, preferably before a potential domino effect can reach Cuba itself.

Lessons Learned

Current and historical Cuban-Venezuelan relations reveal how important effective intelligence capabilities are as a strategic vector for power projection at the service of national

interests. Through its intelligence apparatus, Cuba has achieved a disproportionate amount of multidimensional influence on Venezuela. It is arguably one of Cuba's biggest geostrategic accomplishments.

Such reality also emphasizes that competent foreign intelligence services cannot be exclusively developed by the greatest powers in the international system. In fact, a relatively small state like Cuba can influence countries whose critical mass is considerably superior. In other words, intelligence services represent a force multiplier that can enhance a country's geopolitical standing and make it a relevant stakeholder in complex dynamics. Their usage can decisively alter the balance of power.

Economic Ties: The Oil Lifeline Today

Less than a month after seizing power in 1959, Fidel Castro embarked on his first trip as leader to seek support for his revolution. The young rebel leader's destination wasn't Moscow or Washington, it was Caracas. Venezuela's government had secretly supported Castro and his rebels with funds and weapons during their fight to oust US-backed dictator Fulgencio Batista. Now a victorious Castro had a new request: Loan Cuba \$300 million dollars-worth of oil. The oil shipments would be "a master trick on the gringos," Castro told then-Venezuelan president Rómulo Betancourt, breaking Cuba's economic dependence on the US. Not wanting to upset Washington, Betancourt frostily replied that if Castro wanted Venezuelan oil, he should buy it on the open market. But Castro got what he wanted, in the end. Today, Venezuelan oil is the lifeblood of Cuban economy, under a barter system where Cuba receives billions of dollars of crude in exchange for Cuban doctors, teachers, sports trainers, and military and intelligence advisers. And now, as political unrest threatens the Maduro régime in Caracas, it also threatens to put the lights out in Havana.

Maduro's rival, Guaidó, has vowed to end Cuban influence in Venezuela, and any change in government could upset the special relationship between the two countries. Shipments from Venezuela have become less frequent, and Cuba is hurrying to expand how much oil it can store. Cuba stores roughly 5 million barrels of oil in total primary storage – enough oil to last the nation 35 to 45 days in a sheer crisis. So far Cubans have not experienced a shortage. But many still

remember the painful end of another special relationship, which led to widespread blackouts and drove Cuban refugees toward the United States: the so-called "Special Period" in the 1990s, when the USSR collapsed.

Cuba, the Soviet Union, and Reminders of a Painful "Special Period"

When Castro first approached Venezuela in 1959, he envisioned a leftist government in control of its massive oil riches, which could support like-minded regimes across the region and finally challenge Washington's control of the hemisphere.

Instead of Venezuela, it was the Soviet Union that ultimately provided crucial support to the Cuban revolution, becoming the island's main trading partner and sending thousands of military and intelligence advisers to island. But Castro never forgot Venezuela's potential, and backed several failed attempts at revolution beginning in the 1960s. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, Cuba found itself in dire need of new allies. The economy on the communist-run island had all but collapsed without Soviet support. Called "the Special Period" in Cuba, Cubans endured wartime food rations, daily blackouts of electricity while thousands of citizens fled the island on rafts.

In 1998, the stars seemed to align for the Cuba-Venezuela alliance that Castro had dreamed of: Hugo Chavez, a charismatic former Army paratrooper, was elected to the Venezuela's presidency. Like Castro, Chavez had led a thwarted uprising but used that failure to raise his profile.

After serving time in jail, Chavez came back to win an upset victory. Both men could speak for hours, casting a spell over their supporters, and both swore to erase the gap between rich and poor in their countries. Castro would eventually take the role of the elder statesmen, and Chavez his heir to the mantle of the leader of the Latin American left.

Access to Latin America's Oil Reserves

In the early 2000s, Castro and Chavez struck a barter deal that pulled Cuba from the depths of its economic crisis with generous dose of petroleum. Cuba gained access to the largest oil reserves on the planet, in exchange for sending doctors and coaches and intelligence advisers and military advisers. Soon Venezuela was sending the island roughly 100,000 barrels of oil a day to the island. In exchange, Cuban doctors set up clinics for the poor — Chavez's political base — in

Venezuela's most downtrodden neighborhoods, and thousands of Venezuelans traveled free of charge to Havana for medical treatment of everything from cataracts to gunshot wounds.

With oil flowing in from Venezuela, Cuba was able to pay off longstanding debts and revamp the island's faded tourism industry. The workers-for-oil deal generated more income than rum, cigars or anything else Cuba produced. The island's citizens became its main export. Cuban workers returned from postings in oil-rich Venezuela carting flat-screen TVs, bottles of whiskey and other hard-to-find items back home.

Chavez took to proclaiming that Cuba and Venezuela were not two countries, but a single one: La Gran Patria, or "the Big Homeland." He frequently popped over to Havana for strategy sessions and to play late night baseball games with Castro.

Castro gave Chavez a sprawling mansion next to the North Korean ambassador's residence. The Cuban government had originally spent a small fortune restoring the house's frescoed ceilings and yards of marble from every region in Italy for Pope John Paul II's 1998 visit. But the pontiff preferred simpler lodging, and the house became Chavez's.

"Desenchúfalos!": Calls to Disconnect "Cuba-zuela"

Venezuela's political opposition criticized the two leaders' tight friendship, saying Castro had all but taken over their country and accusing Cuba's intelligence services of monitoring Chavez's own military for loyalty. Desenchúfalos or "disconnect them" became a rallying cry of the Venezuelan opposition, referring to the Cubans. When Chavez was briefly ousted by the Venezuelan military, Fidel Castro called him by phone and urged him to take power back. "Are you president still or not?" Castro told him, according to Cuba's state-run press. Chavez regained control of the country. When Chavez announced he had pelvic cancer in 2011, he flew to Havana for treatment. Venezuelan officials in the city attended a public ceremony of the Afro-Caribbean Santería religion meant to safeguard Chavez. When his death was announced in March 2013, Havana officials announced three days of official mourning and banned live music from being played in public.

The alliance continued with Chavez's handpicked successor Nicolas Maduro, a former bus driver who had studied in Cuba in his youth. But Venezuela's oil production plummeted, as Chavez stacked the country's oil industry with loyalists who mismanaged the country's principal export.

A Downturn for Venezuela

As Venezuela's economy tanked, soon it was the Venezuelans working in Cuba who returned home with bags packed with toilet paper, toothpaste, soap and other items that had disappeared from store shelves back home. Cuba now receives about 50,000 barrels of oil a day from Venezuela, about half of what it did during its neighbor's boom years. Although analysts believe that Cuba has also recently imported oil from Russia and Algeria, it is unlikely that the island enjoys the same favorable terms that it receives from its socialist ally and neighbor.

As Guaidó demands new elections in Venezuela and heads of state around the world weigh in on the country's future, it's not just the local opposition threatening the bond between Caracas and Havana. United States National Security Adviser John Bolton blamed Chavez and Maduro for allowing Venezuela's penetration by adversaries of the United States, not least of which is Cuba. Some foreign opponents to the Cuban-Venezuelan alliance call the country 'Cuba-zuela', reflecting the grip that Cuba's military and security forces have on the Maduro regime. As such, United States officials see it as a strategic significant threat to the United States. The United States announced new sanctions on Venezuelan oil, which could cripple the tottering Venezuelan oil industry, and further shrink its supply to Havana. Cuban officials remain steadfast in their commitment that they will not abandon their Venezuelan comrades. However, United States officials are eyeing Cuba as the key to forcing embattled president Nicolas Maduro's resignation. Pressure Cuba, their reasoning goes, and Cuba will pressure Venezuela.

Pressure from the United States

In a surprise twist, the U.S. and other allies are considering negotiating with Cuba to join efforts to resolve the political standoff in Venezuela after the recent failed attempt by interim President Juan Guaidó to persuade his country's military to withdraw its support for Nicolás Maduro. U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo surprised the international community in May when he declared that the United States was working with Cuba to secure Maduro's departure from Venezuela.

“We are working very diligently to ensure that Maduro leaves and we get free and fair elections in Venezuela,” Pompeo said during an appearance on the CBS program “Face the Nation.” “That will require the 2,300 Cuban security personnel, frankly the people closest to

Maduro who are protecting ... Maduro, they've got to leave. We're working with the Cubans to try and get an outcome that will let the Venezuelans have this opportunity.”

In response to questions about the remarks, the State Department later released a statement saying that the U.S. government “regularly engage[s] with the Cuban government.” A spokesperson for the Western Hemisphere Affairs bureau added that they do not get into the specifics of their diplomatic discussions. Pompeo’s comments were also the first time the U.S. government put a number on the Cuban security presence in Venezuela. Several Trump administration officials and members of Congress have claimed that Cuban counterintelligence agents are helping Maduro to stay in power and serve on his inner security detail. National Security Advisor John Bolton previously alleged that Cuba has 20,000 military personnel in Venezuela. Havana has denied that figure, saying that more than 90 percent of the Cubans in the South American country are medical personnel. Havana also has denied any role in security operations in Venezuela.

Although the U.S. government has repeatedly accused Cuba of supporting Maduro, the talk of negotiations started to move rapidly after the Lima Group issued a statement Friday promising “to take the steps necessary for Cuba to participate in the search for a solution to the crisis in Venezuela.”

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau spoke on the phone with Cuban leader Miguel Díaz-Canel shortly following the United States’ shift in position in May. “The Prime Minister, on behalf of the Lima Group, underscored the desire to see free and fair elections and the constitution upheld in Venezuela,” said a Canadian government statement. “The Prime Minister also reiterated his concern for the ongoing suffering of the Venezuelan people. The two leaders discussed ways they could work together to support a peaceful resolution to the crisis.”

However, official Cuban opinion on the telephone chat argues that Cuba wants Maduro to participate in the negotiations — a move unacceptable so far to the opposition in Venezuela. Díaz-Canel spoke with Canadian PM Trudeau and emphasized the need for dialogue with President Maduro based on respect for Venezuelan sovereignty and International Law without threats or foreign interventions. As a member of the Lima Group, Canada is positioned to mediate with Havana because it is also Cuba’s fourth largest trade partner and its top source of tourists. The Canadian government also has opposed the full application of the Helms-Burton law, which has opened the doors to lawsuits in federal courts against Cuban and foreign companies benefiting

from properties seized by the Castro regime after 1959. In a statement issued Friday, Canada said it would not recognize the rulings on any such lawsuits.

The European Union joined the approaches to Havana Saturday, with its high representative, Federica Mogherini, speaking by phone with Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez. That same day, Rodríguez wrote on Twitter that Cuba “will always support and contribute to the resolution of difference through a dialogue that respects the sovereign equality of nations, based on international right and the non-use of threats, force or foreign intervention.” But it remains unclear just how interested Cuba would be in becoming part of the solution to the Venezuelan crisis. The island depends on Venezuelan oil for nearly half its domestic consumption and has insisted on its support for Maduro — for now more valuable to Cuba in Caracas than in Havana.

At the same time, those crude deliveries have shrunk substantially, other countries have shut their doors to Cuban medical personnel (who provide hard currency for Havana) and the growing shortages of basic food items are reflected on the long lines outside markets. Raúl Castro, who previously served as president and now heads Cuba’s Communist Party, has warned island residents to prepare for a deepening of the crisis, and the country’s elites appear to be nervous. On May 1, officials skipped the annual speech during a massive Labor Day march. And on Tuesday the government canceled the annual march against homophobia, to avoid any public protests.

Should Cuba Give-In to the United States?

Cuba would have few incentives to support Guaidó — recognized as interim president of Venezuela by more than 50 countries — who has ordered a halt to all oil shipments to Cuba. The best scenario for the Cuban government, from the perspective of the United States, would be a negotiation that guarantees the political survival of the ruling *Chavismo* party and the continuation, even if partial, of the agreement to exchange oil for medical services.

The Cuban government, which until recently had responded to U.S. accusations with its own rhetoric about a supposed U.S. invasion of Venezuela, also may have signaled that it may be interested in participating in the negotiations by releasing a political prisoner, a gesture the Cuban government only makes if taking part in high-profile negotiations.

On May 04, 2019, the government released on probation Eduardo Cardet, Cuba's best-known political prisoner and a leader of the Christian Liberation Movement founded by the late Oswaldo Payá. Cardet was convicted in 2016 to three years in prison on charges of disturbing the public order by criticizing the late Fidel Castro. The change of mind about a dialogue may signal that the Cuban government believes that a political settlement is Maduro's best option. The United States government argues that unless the army changes sides, a political settlement is the best the opposition can hope for as well, prescribing that is the basis for a serious negotiation.

Nevertheless, it's also unclear how far the Trump administration would be willing to go in that direction. U.S.-Cuba relations have deteriorated rapidly after Washington tightened U.S. economic sanctions and visas, and the two countries have exchanged a flurry of insults and accusations. Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Kimberly Breier refused to meet with Carlos Fernández de Cossío, in charge of the Cuban Foreign Ministry department that handles U.S. affairs in early May. The State Department said Fernández de Cossío was received on a courtesy call but met with no top U.S. officials. The source added that he briefly met an officer at the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs and that there were no substantive conversations. A State Department spokesperson said U.S. officials are "continuing to review the full range of actions available to hold the Cuban regime accountable for its repressive actions against its own people as well as its role in repressing the people of Venezuela and continuing to prop up Maduro. "The Cuban government knows that it needs to get out of Venezuela and stop supporting Maduro. We've made our position very clear," she added.

Although some analysts believe that bringing Cuba to the negotiating table is inevitable, because of the Venezuelan opposition's failure to persuade the military high command to support Guaidó, the idea is not popular among many Venezuelans and Cubans who doubt Havana is ready to negotiate in good faith. Critics of negotiations say the Cuban government will use them to buy time for Maduro, just as Maduro has used past negotiations with his opponents to delay and disarm efforts to remove him from office.

"Strategically it makes no sense," said Cuban opposition activist Rosa María Payá, "because the Socialist mafias in power in Venezuela are part of the Cuban regime, or close to it. Therefore the Castro people would go in [to negotiations] to guarantee the survival of the criminal

Venezuelan regime, which is much bigger than Maduro, and not to end the dictatorship. For the Cuba regime, it's convenient to distract public attention from the crimes that it is itself committing in Venezuela and in Cuba," Payá added. "It's a Castro tactic, to create a problem in order to position itself as the solution."

Criticisms of Julio Borges, Guaidó's representative on the Lima Group, have been so strident on social media that Borges had to deny that the opposition had requested the dialogue with Havana. "Because of the opinions that one group is trying to sow, I want to make clear that we have not requested a dialogue with Cuba. On the contrary, we have taken the lead on actions to put more pressure on the Cuban government and accelerate its departure from Venezuela," Borges said. "Let's remember: The enemy is in front of us."

Cuban Allied Support for Maduro

The decision by the United States and a growing number of other countries to recognize a little-known opposition figure as interim president of Venezuela has cast a spotlight on the failing petrostate's chief foreign backers. Without the continued support of Russia, China, and Cuba, it is unlikely President Nicolas Maduro's government will last for long. Cuba has contributed greatly to the support of President Maduro's claim to the Venezuelan presidency. As Venezuela's main political supporter in Latin America, Cuba supplies the Maduro regime with large numbers of security and military advisors to spy on the military ranks, as well as to provide other intelligence. Cuba has also provided Venezuela with hundreds of doctors, nurses, teachers, engineers, and other professionals since 2000, when Chavez agreed to supply Cuba with discounted oil. In 2017, there were as many as fifteen thousand Cubans living in Venezuela. Beyond security personnel and doctors, Cuba's allies have also contributed greatly in Maduro's efforts against Guaido and his international supporters.

Russian Federation

The Russian Federation has been one of Venezuela's closest allies since 2006, when President Hugo Chavez, a socialist strongman and fierce critic of the United States, signed a \$2.9 billion arms deal in exchange for Russian fighter aircraft. The relationship allowed Russia access

to Venezuelan oil assets at below-market prices. Today, Russia's ties to the country are significant, both politically, militarily, and economically.

Venezuela remains a strategic political foothold for Russia as it seeks to offset United States influence in Latin America and elsewhere. Russia is one of five permanent, veto-wielding members of the UN Security Council, and it has threatened to block any council resolutions to suspend Venezuela from the United Nations. The Kremlin has condemned the Trump administration's recognition of opposition leader Juan Guaido and warned the United States and its allies against a military intervention. Russia is also Venezuela's largest supplier of weapons, having sold the country more than \$10 billion in hardware since the mid-2000s, including assault rifles, jet fighters, tanks, and missile systems. The two nations also conduct joint military exercises, and Russian jets and warships make regular stopovers. In a recent show of force, two Russian bombers capable of carrying nuclear weapons visited Venezuela.

The Russian Federation has long been a lender of last resort to the Venezuelan government. In late 2017, Moscow bailed Venezuela out by restructuring more than \$3 billion in sovereign debt, which allowed the Maduro government to meet its obligations to other creditors. Meanwhile, Russia's state-backed oil giant, Rosneft, is one of Venezuela's largest foreign backers, loaning it roughly \$2.5 billion in recent years in exchange for future energy shipments. Rosneft also co-owns several oil and gas projects with PDVSA, Venezuela's state energy company—which was just sanctioned by the United States—and it has a 49 percent stake in Citgo, PDVSA's United States refining arm.

China

China has been Venezuela's other major financial crutch, supplementing the contributions of the Russian Federation. It views the socialist regime in Venezuela as a geopolitical ally and an important trading partner. Over the past decade, Beijing has lent Caracas some \$70 billion, mostly for development projects, in exchange for future oil shipments. Analysts estimate the Maduro regime owes China about \$13 billion. China is behind only the United States and India as an importer of Venezuelan crude. However, President Xi Jinping has thus far refused to restructure Venezuela's outstanding loans, and some experts suggest China could shift its support to Guaido

if he were to guarantee full repayment of Chinese loans. While Beijing has continued its support for Maduro in recent years, its loyalty largely depends on Caracas's capacity to pay its debts. In recent years, China has grown increasingly wary of Venezuela defaulting on its payments, and it has opened communication channels with the opposition. Even so, China—which, like Russia, has a permanent seat on the Security Council—objects to UN intervention in Venezuela's political affairs.

What to Look For

Maduro's allies have enabled him to maintain his position of power despite years of domestic unrest and growing international pressure to step down. Decisions by China, Cuba, and the Russian Federation to withdraw their support could prove the Maduro regime's undoing. On the other hand, increasing their assistance could extend Maduro's reign. Ultimately, what comes next rests on the strength of Maduro's alliances.

Other Involved Nations

After Maduro's inauguration in January, the US, Canada, and Brazil declared him an 'illegitimate dictator'. International demonstrations occurred on both sides, with hundreds of thousands of Venezuelans around the world in support of both Guaido and Maduro.⁵⁴ Some of the more significant responses and declarations may be categorized as below:

Brazil

Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro declared he would devote his full attention to 're-establish order, democracy, and freedom' in Venezuela. The Bolsonaro administration recognized Juan Guaido as the legitimate president of Venezuela in January 2019.⁵⁵ Despite closing its sea

⁵⁴ Sesin, C. "Venezuelans Take to the Streets Worldwide Calling for an End to Maduros Presidency." *NBCNews.com*, NBCUniversal News Group, 3 Feb. 2019, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/venezuelans-take-streets-worldwide-calling-end-maduro-s-presidency-n966076>

⁵⁵ Gestion, R. "Brasil reconoce a Juan Guaido como presidente interino de Venezuela". *Gestion*, 12 Jan. 2019, <https://gestion.pe/mundo/brasil-reconoce-juan-guaido-legitimo-presidente-venezuela-nndc-255542-noticia/>

and air borders with Curacao, Brazil has promised to send humanitarian aid to the Venezuelan border to support Guaido's efforts to provide food and supplies to Venezuelans in need.⁵⁶

China

In January 2019, China was originally supportive of Maduro releasing statements that China "supports efforts made by the Venezuelan government to protect the country's sovereignty, independence, and stability".⁵⁷ Moving into February 2019, China's stance began to soften in fear of alienating other South American stakeholders and out of frustration for Venezuela's inability to repay its \$67B USD of debt owed to China.⁵⁸ At this point, China's priority has shifted to a more neutral stance, adopting a constructive role to restore Venezuela to a normal development path while remaining opposed to foreign interference, force, threats, or unilateral sanctions with regards to the current crisis. Further, President Xi issued a statement supporting the resolution of conflict between the Maduro and Guaido sides of the conflict through inclusive political dialogue.⁵⁹

Colombia

Due to its geographical proximity to Venezuela, Colombia has taken in over 1.3 million Venezuelan refugees in the past two years.⁶⁰ Along with many other countries, Colombia has stated its firm support for Guaido, condemning Maduro's actions as human rights violations. Colombia's President, Ivan Duque, has spoken against a military intervention in Venezuela, proposing a plan similar to the US's Marshall Plan, which would provide \$40 billion of international aid to rebuild

⁵⁶ "Venezuela Crisis: Four Million Have Fled the Country, UN Says." BBC News. June 07, 2019. Accessed August 14, 2019. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-48559739>.

⁵⁷ Rawlins, C, G. "China opposes outside interference in Venezuela's affairs". *Reuters.com*, 24 Jan. 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-venezuela-politics-china/china-opposes-outside-interference-in-venezuelas-affairs-idUSKCN1PI18O>

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ "Military Intervention Not an Answer for Venezuela: Colombia..." Reuters. March 15, 2019. Accessed August 14, 2019. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-venezuela-politics-colombia/military-intervention-not-an-answer-for-venezuela-colombia-president-tells-paper-idUSKCN1QW19T>.

Venezuela's economic and social structures.⁶¹ Maduro officially cut diplomatic ties with Colombia in February of 2019, following an outbreak of violence along the two countries' borders.⁶²

Iran

Iran supports Maduro's government, and looks unfavorably upon any kind of foreign intervention in its internal affairs. Condemning US threats and sanctions against Venezuela, Iran has spoken up against any military action by the US, calling American intervention "a flagrant violation of the United Nations Charter."⁶³ Despite the geographical distance Iran and Venezuela, the two nations have recently strengthened their ties over a common hostility toward the US.

Russia

Russia has been another major international player in the Venezuelan crisis in support of Nicolas Maduro, having supported Venezuela from military and economic aspects since President Chavez.⁶⁴ As one of the Maduro government's most vocal supporters, Russia has flown Tu-160 nuclear capable bombers to Venezuela, supported Maduro in the UN, and facilitated a large portion of arms trade with Venezuela.⁶⁵ Domestic relations have widely varied: from praising Russia's willingness to voice its support for Maduro and confront the US, to criticisms of Russia for continuing to invest in economic aid to the black hole of Venezuela.⁶⁶

United States of America

The United States was among one of the first nations to recognize Guaido's presidency as legitimate after he swore in in January 2019, and has remained a staunch supporter of Guaido's

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Smith-Spark, Laura. "Venezuela's Maduro Breaks Relations with Colombia in Standoff over Aid." CNN. February 24, 2019. Accessed August 14, 2019. <https://www.cnn.com/2019/02/23/americas/venezuela-brazil-violence-intl/index.html>.

⁶³ O'Connor, Tom. "Iran Defends Venezuela as the U.S. Warns of "all Options" against Two More Oil-rich Nations." Newsweek. May 03, 2019. Accessed August 14, 2019. <https://www.newsweek.com/iran-defends-venezuela-all-options-oil-1414237>.

⁶⁴ Rainsford, S. "Venezuela Crisis: Why Russia has so much to lose." *BBCNews.com*, 1 Feb. 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-47087875>

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

government while refusing to recognize Maduro's legitimacy.⁶⁷ In the same month, the US imposed economic sanctions on the Venezuelan state-owned oil and gas company PDVSA, and withdrew its diplomats from Caracas in March.⁶⁸ The United States argues that Cuba's self-interest is a stable Venezuela that will continue to provide Cuba with oil in exchange for medical services. The status quo is not good for Cuba because it is unstable as oil shipments continue to decline making the future highly uncertain.

European Union

Over half of EU member states including the UK, France, Germany, and Spain have declared their support for the Guaido government. The EU has issued statements supporting "the National Assembly as the democratically elected institution whose powers need to be restored and respected" and condemned the Constituent Assembly for stripping Guaido's parliamentary immunity.⁶⁹

The Lima Group

Established in August 2017, the Lima Group was established as a multilateral body to establish a peaceful exit to the Crisis in Venezuela.⁷⁰ At this point, the group broadly advocates for the release of political prisoners, calls for free elections, offers humanitarian aid, and criticizes the breakdown of democracy in Venezuela.⁷¹ The group--except for Mexico and a few others, which has called for non-intervention in Venezuelan internal affairs--continued to back the Guaido government and supports "the restoration of democracy and constitutional order in Venezuela."⁷²

⁶⁷ Ma, A. "Almost every country in Latin America sided with Trump against Venezuela's embattled President Maduro" *Business Insider*, 24 Jan. 2019, <https://www.businessinsider.com/venezuela-almost-all-latin-america-like-trump-supports-maduro-rival-2019-1?r=US&IR=T>

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ OAS. "OAS Permanent Council Agrees "to not recognize the legitimacy of Nicolas Maduro's new term". OAS Press Release, 10 Jan. 2019, http://www.oas.org/en/media_center/press_release.asp?sCodigo=E-001/19

⁷⁰ Taj, M. "Mexico urges regional bloc not to meddle in Venezuela". *Reuters*, 4 Jan. 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-venezuela-politics/mexico-urges-regional-bloc-not-to-meddle-in-venezuela-idUSKCN1OY1R4>

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

United Nations

The UN Security Council first met in January 2019 to discuss Venezuela, but no consensus was reached.⁷³ In February, a group of UN delegates including Russia, China, and Venezuela declared the American-led effort to change Venezuelan government “illicit.”⁷⁴ The Security Council itself is heavily divided: the US drafted a resolution for new elections in Venezuela, humanitarian aid, and recognition of Guaido—a resolution which was vetoed by Russia and China; Russia also proposed a resolution calling for dialogue between Maduro and Guaido governments in line with the Montevideo Initiative from Mexico and Uruguay (at the International Conference on the Situation in Venezuela), but failed to pass.⁷⁵

Organization of American States (OAS)

The OAS approved a resolution on January 10, 2019 “to not recognize the legitimacy of Nicolas Maduro’s new term.”⁷⁶ Days later, the Secretary General of the OAS Luis Almagro recognized Guaido as legitimate; the committee itself is divided between those supportive of Guaido’s government and others who remained neutral on the presidential crisis.⁷⁷

Questions to Consider

1. What is the most pressing aspect of the Venezuelan crisis? Is it more important to address the humanitarian or political aspect of the issue first?
2. What would potential Cuban military intervention in Venezuela look like, and how involved should Cuba be in rebuilding the Venezuelan economy and society?
3. How do the historical ties that Venezuela has with Cuba affect Cuba’s current political and economic policies towards Venezuela?

⁷³ Schneider, E. “Venezuela: Competing US, Russia resolutions fail to pass in Security Council” *US News*, 28 Feb. 2019, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/02/1033832>

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ OAS. “OAS Permanent Council Agrees “to not recognize the legitimacy of Nicolas Maduro’s new term”. OAS Press Release, 10 Jan. 2019, http://www.oas.org/en/media_center/press_release.asp?sCodigo=E-001/19

⁷⁷ Ibid.

4. How do Cuba's ties to historical allies like China and the Russian Federation as well as historical enemies like the United States of America affect Cuba's current political and economic policies towards Venezuela?
5. How do international accusations of President Díaz-Canel acting as a "second dictator" in Venezuela affect the way Cuba is seen by the international community in regards to the Venezuela crisis?
6. Does the Venezuela crisis parallel to the international power struggle from the Cold War? If so, how will that parallel affect the ultimate outcome of the Venezuela crisis on a domestic and international scale?
7. If Maduro is overthrown, to what extent should international players be a part of the re-election process?

Helpful Resources

Articles

1. [Primer on Venezuela](#)
2. [How Cuba Taught Venezuela to Quash Military Dissent](#)
3. [What Military Intervention in Venezuela Would Look Like](#)
4. [OHCHR Venezuela Report 2018](#)
5. [How Venezuela went from a rich democracy to a dictatorship on the brink of collapse](#)
6. [The Venezuelan Exodus](#)
7. [Venezuela Fast Facts](#)
8. [United States Handbook on the Cuban Armed Forces](#)
9. [How Much Influence Does Cuba Have Over Venezuela?](#)

Videos

1. [PacMUN 2019 Venezuelan Crisis Youtube Playlist](#)

Character List

First Vice President of Council of Ministers - Salvador Valdés Mesa

Vice President of Council of Ministers- Ramiro Valdés Menéndez

Vice President of Council of Ministers- Antonio Enrique Lussón Battle

Vice President of Council of Ministers - Adel Onofre Yzquierdo Rodríguez

Vice President of Council of Ministers- Roberto Morales Ojeda

Vice President of Council of Ministers- Inés María Chapman

Minister of Economy and Planning – Alejandro Gil Fernández

Minister of the Interior- Julio César Gandarilla Bermejo

Minister of Foreign Affairs – Bruno Eduardo Rodríguez Parrilla

Minister of Justice – Oscar Manuel Silveira Martínez

Minister of the Revolutionary Armed Forces – Leopoldo Cintra Frias

Minister of Public Health – José Ángel Portal Miranda

Minister of Labor and Social Security - Margarita Marlene González Fernández

Minister of Education - Ena Elsa Velazquez Cobiella

Ministerial President of the Central Bank of Cuba - Ernesto Medina Villaveirán

Minister of Science, Technology and Environment - Elba Rosa Pérez Montoya

Minister of Informatics and Communications - Jorge Luis Perdomo Di-Lella

Minister of Domestic Trade - Betsy Díaz Velázquez

Minister of Foreign Trade and Investment - Rodrigo Malmierca Diaz

Minister of Finance and Prices - Lina Olinda Pedraza Rodriguez

Minister of Industry - Salvador Pardo Cruz

Technology & Award Policy

Technology

As PacMUN's official technology policy is at each chair's discretion, I would like to state that all delegates in the JCC: US committee are permitted to use electronic devices to access notes, articles, and other materials related to the conference. However, because there is no official Wi-Fi use available during PacMUN, delegates will not be allowed to access the internet during committee sessions. This includes internet use via smartphones as well as hotspots. Additionally, delegates are not permitted to use electronic devices for anything other than committee purposes (playing games, watching videos, texting, etc). Any delegates found breaking technology policy may be subject to having their device confiscated for the duration of committee.

Position Papers

All delegates interested in being eligible for awards must submit a position paper no more than 1 page, single spaced, 12 pt font, with 1 inch margins. Please make sure to cite your sources on a separate bibliography page in Chicago Manual of Style. For continuity I ask that delegates adhere to the following header formatting.

EXAMPLE

Name: Katie K. Sakys

Position: President, Miguel Díaz-Canel

Committee: JCC: Cuba

Topic: The Venezuelan Crisis

Awards

Delegates are required to submit their position papers via email to the chair by November 11, 2019 at 11:59pm HST. Lateness will be taken into consideration when deciding awards, and delegates who do not submit a position paper at all will be ineligible for any award.

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