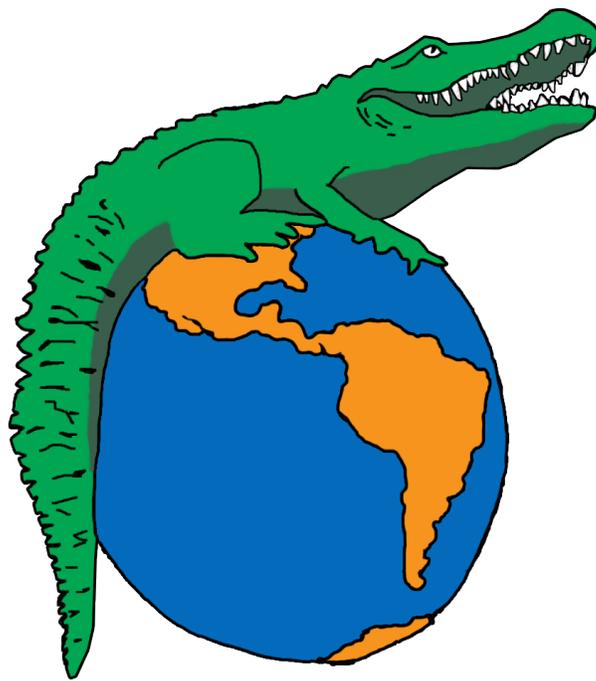


GatorMUN XVI

Background Guide



7th Summit of the
Americas

Dear Delegates,

Hello and welcome to the 7th Summit of the Americas Specialized General Assembly, and more broadly GatorMUN XVI. My name is Austin Koenig, and I am both honored and excited to direct this committee where we will dive headfirst into some of the most pressing issues that currently plague Latin America. I am a second year economics and international studies dual major with a focus on international trade. While Model UN does seem to preside over large parts of my life, in my free time you can find me camping, watching Arsenal get seventh place, or cooking meals I cannot afford.

Latin America is a region that has a complex and unique system of governance that has only recently come into its current form. Leftist governments lead by either omnipotent populists or newly elected social democracies quickly became the norm as, for the first time, Latin Americans were given a choice in who was going to lead them. Up until this point military dictators and European powers had dominated both the political and social spheres of the region and led to a lack of stability in governance. Unfortunately, this trend was not abolished by the establishment of new governments. The same corruption and violence that defined the early post-Columbian era resurfaced in these leftist systems and led to the rise of dictators accompanied by foreign tampering with Latin American sovereignty.

In this committee our goal is going to set Latin America up for the positive future that its growing population and abundant resources allow for, instead of continuing to operate in the third world as many nations have. The beginnings of industrialization are present in many nations as they look to shift away from resource-based economies, yet corrupt officials continue to block the waves of progress. Some nations, such as Venezuela, have been thrown into turmoil by poor leadership and a lack of concern for the lives of Venezuelans. To combat this, we must act as one to establish a system in which corrupt officials are no longer able to operate as rogue agents that can harm the future of Latin America.

I am ecstatic to be directing this assembly and cannot wait to see the innovative and unique solutions that are proposed by you. In the words of Simon Bolivar, "In the unity of our nations rests the glorious future of our peoples." This idea is the cornerstone of the Summit of the Americas. As we come up with comprehensive solutions, remember that teamwork is a must. Thank you for coming to GatorMUN XVI and I hope you are as eager to dive into Latin American politics as I am! If you have any questions for me, direct them to gatormun@gmail.com where I will respond as timely as possible.

Your Director,
Austin Koenig

Rules of Procedure

Quorum

A majority of voting members answering to the roll at each session shall constitute a quorum for that session. This means that half plus one of all voting members are present. Quorum will be assumed consistent unless questioned through a Point of Order. Delegates may request to be noted as “Present” or “Present and Voting.”

Motion to Open Debate

This opens the floor for debate, allowing other points or motions.

Motion to Set the Agenda

This motion determines the order in which the topics of a committee will be debated. Permission to speak will be accorded to one speaker for and one speaker against, and a two-thirds majority is required for the motion to pass.

Motion to Open the Speaker’s List

Opening the Speaker’s List requires a simple majority to pass. A delegate may only be present on the Speaker’s List once, but may re-enter after he/she has spoken. If the Speaker’s List expires, debate then closes.

Motion to Set Speaking Time

Speaking Time must be indicated by this motion from the floor before any members of the body may speak on the Speaker’s List. This motion must also accompany any motion for a Moderated Caucus. In a Motion to Set Speaking Time for the formal Speaker’s List, a delegate may also specify a number of questions or comments to automatically affix to the Speaking Time. These designated questions or comments may also have Speaking Time or Response Time (in the case of a question) limits, but these are not required. The Director may rule any Motion to Set Speaking Time dilatory. This motion requires a simple majority. Any delegate may make this motion between formal speakers in an effort to change the Speaking Time.

Motion to Close the Speaker’s List

The Speaker’s List may be closed upon a motion from the floor. Permission to speak will be accorded to one speaker for and one speaker against, and a two-thirds majority is required for the motion to pass.

Motion to Suspend the Rules for the Purpose of a Moderated Caucus

This motion must include three specifications:

- a. Length of the Caucus
- b. Speaking time, and
- c. Reason for the Caucus.

During a moderated caucus, delegates will be called on to speak by the Committee Director. Delegates will raise their placards to be recognized. Delegates must maintain the same degree of decorum throughout a Moderated Caucus as in formal debate. This motion requires a simple majority to pass.

Motion to Suspend the Rules for the Purpose of an Unmoderated Caucus

This motion must include the length of the Caucus. During an unmoderated caucus, delegates may get up from their seats and talk amongst themselves. This motion requires a simple majority to pass. The length of an unmoderated caucus should never exceed twenty minutes.

Motion to Suspend the Meeting

This motion is in order if there is a scheduled break in debate to be observed. (ie. Lunch!) This motion requires a simple majority vote. The Committee Director may refuse to entertain this motion at their discretion.

Motion to Adjourn the Meeting

This motion is in order at the end of the last committee session. It signifies the closing of the committee until next year's conference.

Motion to Table the Topic

If a delegate believes that the flow of debate has become stagnant, he/she may make this motion. To Table the Topic is to halt debate on the present Topic, save the speakers' list and all draft resolutions, and move on to the next Topic on the Agenda. The delegate making this motion may also choose to specify a previously tabled Topic. This motion requires a two-thirds vote to pass. The Topic may be returned to at any time by tabling the present Topic and adding the phrase "for the purpose of returning to Tabled Topic ____," to this motion. If no Topics have been previously tabled, debate must follow the established Agenda. This motion is to be used sparingly.

Points of Order

Points of Order will only be recognized for the following items:

- a) To recognize errors in voting, tabulation, or procedure,
- b) To question relevance of debate to the current Topic or
- c) To question a quorum.

A Point of Order may interrupt a speaker if necessary and it is to be used sparingly.

Points of Inquiry

When there is no discussion on the floor, a delegate may direct a question to the Committee Director. Any question directed to another delegate may only be asked immediately after the delegate has finished speaking on a substantive matter. A delegate that declines to respond to a question after a formal speech forfeits any further questioning time. The question must conform to the following format:

Delegate from Country A raises placard to be recognized by the Committee Director.

Committee Director: "To what point do you rise?"

Country A: "Point of Inquiry."

Committee Director: "State your Point."

Country A: "Will the delegate from Country B (who must have just concluded a substantive speech) yield to a question?"

Committee Director: "Will the Delegate Yield?"

Country B: "I will" or "I will not" (if not, return to the next business item)

Country A asks their question (it must not be a rhetorical question.)

Country B may choose to respond or to decline.

If the Delegate from Country B does not yield to or chooses not to answer a question from Country A, then he/she yields all remaining questioning time to the Committee Director.

Points of Personal Privilege

Points of personal privilege are used to request information or clarification and conduct all other business of the body except Motions or Points specifically mentioned in the Rules of Procedure.

Please note: The Director may refuse to recognize Points of Order, Points of Inquiry or Points of Personal Privilege if the Committee Director believes the decorum and restraint inherent in the exercise has been violated, or if the point is deemed dilatory in nature.

Rights of Reply

At the Committee Director's discretion, any member nation or observer may be granted a Right of Reply to answer serious insults directed at the dignity of the delegate present. The Director has the ABSOLUTE AUTHORITY to accept or reject Rights of Reply, and the decision IS NOT SUBJECT TO APPEAL. Delegates who feel they are being treated unfairly may take their complaint to any member of the Secretariat.

Working Papers and Draft Resolutions

Once a Working Paper has been submitted, approved, distributed, and formally introduced to the body, it can and will be referred to as a "Draft Resolution." In order for a Working Paper to be submitted to the Committee Director, it must be in correct format and bear the names of a combination of a number of Sponsors and Signatories necessary to introduce, as determined by the Committee Director.

Sponsors are the writers of the Working Paper, and agree with it in its entirety. They should be able to vote 'yes' for the paper during voting procedure. Signatories are those delegates interested in bringing the Working Paper to the floor for debate, but do not necessarily agree with its contents.

A delegate can motion to discuss the working paper during a moderated caucus or unmoderated caucus. A delegate can also motion for an author's panel, which is essentially a moderated caucus moderated by the authors. It is the chair's discretion on the maximum amount of authors allowed on the author's panel.

Friendly Amendments

Friendly Amendments are any changes to a formally introduced Directive that *all* Sponsors agree to in writing. The Committee Director must approve the Friendly Amendment and confirm each Sponsor's agreement both verbally and in writing.

Unfriendly Amendments

Unfriendly Amendments are any substantive changes to a formally introduced Directive that are not agreed to by all of the Sponsors of the Directive. In order to introduce an Unfriendly Amendment, the Unfriendly Amendment must have the number equivalent to 1/3 of Quorum confirmed signatories. The Committee Director has the authority to discern between substantive and nonsubstantive Unfriendly amendment proposals.

Plagiarism

GatorMUN maintains a zero-tolerance policy in regards to plagiarism. Delegates found to have used the ideas of others without properly citing those individuals, organizations, or documents will have their credentials revoked for the duration of the GatorMUN conference. This is a very serious offense.

Motion to Close Debate and Voting Procedures

A motion to close debate may only pass with a two-thirds majority. Once this motion passes, and the committee enters Voting Procedure, no occupants of the committee room may exit the Committee Room, and no individual may enter the Committee Room from the outside. A member of the Dias will secure all doors. No talking, passing notes, or communicating of any kind will be tolerated during voting procedures.

Once moving into voting procedures chair can only accept these motions:

- A point of order to correct an error in procedure
- An appeal of the decision of the chair
- A motion for division
- A motion for roll call vote
- A motion for adoption by acclamation

Each Draft Resolution will be read to the body and voted upon in the order which they were introduced. Any Proposed Unfriendly Amendments to each Draft Resolution will be read to the body and voted upon before the main body of the Draft Resolution as a whole is put to a vote. The Committee will adopt Directives and Unfriendly Amendments to Directives if these documents pass with a simple majority. Specialized committees should refer to their background guides or Committee Directors for information concerning specific voting procedures. Unless otherwise specified by the Secretariat, each Committee may pass as many resolutions as it agrees are necessary to efficiently address the Topic

Delegates who requested to be noted as “Present and Voting” are unable to abstain during voting procedure. Abstentions will not be counted in the tallying of a majority. For example, 5 yes votes, 4 no votes, and 7 abstentions means that the Directive passes.

Roll Call Voting

A counted placard vote will be considered sufficient unless any delegate to the committee motions for a Roll Call Vote. If a Roll Call Vote is requested, the committee must comply. All delegates must vote: “For,” “Against,” “Abstain,” or “Pass.”

During a Roll Call vote, any delegate who answers, “Pass,” reserves his/her vote until the Committee Director has exhausted the Roll. However, once the Committee Director returns to “Passing” Delegates, they must vote: “For” or “Against.”

Voting with Rights

During a Roll Call vote delegates may vote “For with Rights” or “Against with Rights.” Delegates will be granted 30 seconds to explain their reasons for voting for or against a draft resolution. This time will come after the tabulation of votes.

Delegates should use this option sparingly. It is meant for delegates who feel that their vote may seem off policy, despite it being correct. The acceptance of rights is up to the director’s discretion. If a speaker goes off topic during their allotted time the director will rule their speech dilatory and move to the next in order.

Accepting by Acclamation

This motion may be stated when the Committee Director asks for points or motions. If a Roll Call Vote is requested, the motion to Accept by Acclamation is voided. If a delegate believes a Directive will pass without opposition, he or she may move to accept the Directive by acclamation. The motion passes unless a single delegate shows opposition. An abstention is not considered opposition. Should the motion fail, the committee will move directly into a Roll Call Vote.

Topic I: Corruption Within Latin America

As Latin America enters the first half of the 21st century, the problems the region encountered during colonialism and the period after have arisen again. Corruption is a reoccurring issue that must continually be addressed by the lawmakers and law enforcers of Latin America so that the region does not fall into complete chaos. Even with strict reforms and leaders that promise change, many countries still cannot break free of their self-made bonds. The pattern of corruption in Latin America is of a very cyclical nature; a new leader promising change from the corruption/external influence/poverty/etc. of the nation. This leader or group of leaders may start with good intentions but as time goes on and they realize their goal is not as easily achievable as they had once thought. They continue attempting to improve their nation through more and more drastic means but in doing so, they are angering other officials or businesses that then try to circumvent the new laws. Eventually, the first leader sees this and takes complete control of the nation (i.e. Venezuela and Cuba), or a new leader arises and takes over from the previous one, which only worsens the situation by attempting to return things to the way they once were (i.e. Pinochet in Chile).

This committee is being held to address this issue along with those that stem from corruption. In a system where only the powerful can prosper, the everyday man is made to suffer in a way that is unacceptable. According to a report by Transparency International, 53% of Latin Americans feel that their country is not doing enough to address corruption and 29% say that they have bribed someone in the past 12 months. In order to address such a complex and deep-reaching topic, this summit must find a way to not only reform the corrupt institutions that already exist, but also prevent future corruption from ever occurring.

Issues Facing Peoples Subjugated to Corrupt Government

1. Misappropriation and Theft of Aid by Government Officials

As a local or national government grows, more money will flow through the veins of the nation. Officials in less developed countries often find it tempting to tap into these veins and fill their own pockets with the earnings of their nation. Others may still use the funds to benefit the public, but only in circumstances that also benefit themselves. This unfair distribution of aid leads to a growing divide between the rich and poor, which results in an increase in social tensions, violence, and malcontent. While many solutions to this issue have been proposed, few have been effective at decreasing these activities. In order for the nations in Latin America to continue to receive aid on a large scale, it must be seen by the international community that their investment will result in a strong and economically-independent Latin America.

2. Theft of Government Funds by Private Entities

The people of a nation rely on government contracting with firms that have the best interest of the people at heart; however, this does not come to pass in Latin America. Companies, typically construction firms or oil companies, overcharge the government and keep additional profits for themselves. Civilians are put in danger when these projects are partially completed, which greatly contributes to the fear of foreign investors who wish to participate in Latin American markets. Reducing civilian's fear of these investors is crucial to the success of Latin American industry.

3. Hindrance of Sustainable and Inclusive Growth

As bribes and other shady business practices emerge, smaller companies that are looking to expand often find it impossible to do so since the market is dominated by wealthy multinational companies such as Petrobras and Odebrecht. These large companies essentially monopolize their product within the country

and drive their competitors into bankruptcy. This, along with some leaders attempting to maintain an easily-controllable, resource-based economy, leads to a slowing of long-term growth and a tendency to stagnate innovation. The actions of these multinational companies result in the development of an outdated and underfunded market devoid of the basic skills needed to succeed on international markets.

4. No Avenue to Express Grievances Against the Government

In many systems, the voices of the people are silenced by authoritarian suppression of the citizens' dissent as they attempted to bring international attention to their countries plight. The government's censorship of media, suppression of protests, and persecution of dissenting speakers are key components to keeping the corrupt government afloat, for the people's outrage would surely grow if they knew how their resources were being squandered. Protests that manage to occur are quickly shut down by extreme shows of government force. In smaller communities, this allows for officials to be especially harsh with grievances since they never reach a power larger than the local office. Most people in these regions do not have the money or time to go to a larger city and seek assistance so their abuse often continues until outside action is taken.

5. A Biased and Harsh Court System

Unjust rule of law must be upheld in the courts or corrupt leaders would simply be tried and convicted. Once the courts become a tool for the ruler of a country to remove his political opponents or grant themselves immunity, it then becomes increasingly difficult to regain control of the region. These courts are made to ignore crimes committed by the people in power and to uphold laws that would otherwise be considered unconstitutional. On a smaller scale, these courts also play a role in censoring unruly citizens or businesses by declaring their activities a threat to the state.

6. Control of Regions by Non-Governmental Groups

Corruption of the government may simply come from the supervising bodies turning a blind eye to crime. Since they bribed and extorted power away from elected officials, cartels in many parts of Latin America operate with little to no resistance. These cartels started out as operations specifically focused on manufacturing and selling illegal substances across the world. As they quickly grew in power their money allowed them to expand from illicit substances to arms dealing and human trafficking. Governments attempted to control these group but the cartels were able to afford better weapons, more men, and pay local officials better than the government. After a certain level of resistance, many governments (i.e. Mexico) lessened the pressure they put on the cartels in an attempt to lower the violence that was resulting from these clashes.

Case Study: Petrobras Brasileiro

Petrobras Brasileiro, the national oil company of Brazil, was founded in 1953 and quickly grew to become one of Latin America's largest and most profitable companies. In the 1990s, Petrobras was privatized by the pink wave government of Fernando Henrique Cardoso. This change was in effect until 2007, when Brazilian president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva slowly began to restore control of the company to the federal government after the discovery of large oil reserves in the country. Lula's government passed regulations stating that Petrobras had exclusive rights to the salt fields, and that no other company could touch this new oil reserve. Lula's party then quickly appointed their own men to the high positions within Petrobras where, once appointed, they began to secretly divert 3% of all contacts to their conspiring partners. Because of the amounts of government money coming into the company to drill in the salt flats, this portion ended up being billions of dollars.

While many arrests are still being made in the nation as a result of the scandal that resulted from the discovery of the corruption, the ruling party's treasurer, João Vaccari Neto, has been imprisoned. Brazil's president, Dilma Rousseff, is under investigation as well for this scandal, as she was the chairman of

Petrobras between 2003 and 2010 when much of the criminal activity occurred. However, while fines have been levied against Petrobras and the other offending parties, no long-term legislation has been passed to keep the businesses and leaders of the nation legally accountable for other brazenly corrupt activities.

Case Study: The 2015 Guatemalan Election

In 2015, a heated election took place in Guatemala between a former TV comedian, Jimmy Morales and the ex-first lady, Sandra Torres. Torres was seen by many as representing elite past of Guatemala, while Morales was a fresh face in politics that promised reform. He decried the corruption that had defined Guatemalan politics for so long and promised his people that he could make the nation better for everyone. In present times, Morales has ordered the head of a United Nations-backed anti-corruption panel to be removed from the country in response to the panel announcing, in conjunction with the attorney general of Guatemala, that they would seek to strip Morales of his immunity from prosecution. The previous president was removed from power after the same group charged him with a customs fraud and he now is in jail awaiting trial for a variety of corruption-based charges. After twenty weeks of mass protest in the streets, the previous president Otto Perez Molina resigned. Morales won 67.4% of the vote in his 2015 election and the people have been slow to turn on him, even though he has been accused of taking their campaign donations and putting them in his private bank accounts. Morales has exploited his popularity to benefit himself and the people do not want to turn on him for he is supposed to be their champion.

The corruption of Morales has become increasingly evident to the international community, however, a lack of investment in the region has lead to very slow and meager international action being taken against the Guatemalan government. As Morales continues to test the limits of his newfound power, the man who once promised a new era for Guatemala is leading them back down the same path that Latin America has defaulted to for the last 300 years.

Past Successes and Failures of Reform in the Region

During the “pink tide” of Latin America new social democracies and leftist leaders sought to replace the corrupt leadership that had existed since the beginning of colonialism. This lead to an era of unprecedented peace and prosperity in the region. The will of the people was being expressed through their government, and the needs of the nation were being met as simultaneously economic strengths were reaching higher potentials. New, non-resource-based markets began to develop, and Latin America was poised to break into international markets.

As the countries and their economies grew, so did the greed of those who were leading this innovation. Leaders such as Carlos Menem in Argentina and Augusto Pinochet in Chile abused their populism to extort the natural resources of their country to ensure that the people were under control. Under Pinochet’s government in particular, this lead to the disappearance and deaths of thousands of Latin Americans, while Menem went to less extreme measures. Pinochet killed the prominent opposition leaders in his country, as well as those in a majority of southern South America. Meanwhile, Menem chose to suppress his opponents through revoking freedom of the press and banning large public gatherings.

While a majority of the governments in the region experienced at least minor levels of corruption, it is important to note that change is still demanded by the populace. When given the chance to explore a new system and attempt to change the fundamentals of politics, they did not pass on the chance. The region is ready for change, and this committee must guarantee that the tools are readily available to usher in a new era of prosperity.

Questions to consider:

In what ways can the citizens of the nations be utilized to fight the growing levels of corruption?

For corruption charges, how should corporations based outside of Latin America be treated in comparison to those within the country?

How can corruption reform occur without reworking the fundamentals of Latin American political structure?

Useful Links

<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/06/corruption-in-latin-america/>

<http://americasmi.com/resources//mexicos-economy-still-looks-strong-despite-its-politics>

<https://www.bloomberg.com/view/articles/2018-03-26/latin-america-s-anti-corruption-fight-can-hurt-economic-growth>

Topic II: The Humanitarian Crisis in Venezuela

Emerging from the 20th century, Venezuela appeared to be one of the many Latin American nations poised for success. High oil prices had led to the country amassing large amounts of wealth, and the quality of life of everyday citizens has increased continually since Chavez has took lead of the country in 1999. While a few people at the top of society did benefit from this wealth more than most, Chavez did an incredibly thorough job at making sure a majority of the funds reached the people. For almost a decade, things in Venezuela were better than they had ever been. In 2008, when the global recession began, the worse case scenario for the Venezuelan people had arisen: oil prices dramatically fell. Between June of 2008 and January of 2009, the global oil price dropped from 161 dollars per barrel all the way to 49 dollars per barrel. With 95% of their nation's exports being crude or refined petroleum, in 6 months two-thirds of the income of the entire nation was eliminated. A key difference between Venezuela and other Latin American nations was that Venezuela taxed their citizens at incredibly low rates. This was only achievable because of the heavy subsidization of taxes through oil profits provided by the government. As oil profits have disappeared, there is now a necessity for the tax burden to be lifted off the cushion of oil money- something that the Venezuelan government has proven unwilling to do up to this point. Services that had once been provided now disappeared, and corruption at the local level began to become more prevalent as salaries of local officials were lowered. Rampant inflation took hold and over time the bolivar became almost worthless compared to the US dollar.

One of the key reasons behind the growing dissent of the Venezuelan people is the recent appointment of President Nicolas Maduro. Maduro was chosen to be Chavez's replacement when he stepped down as head of the Venezuelan government. When Maduro came to office people were excited because Chavez hand-picked him as his successor and they had no doubts in Chavez's ability to choose a new leader. While Maduro did make mistakes in the beginning of his presidency, the people's faith in Chavez still made them lend him their support, but this eventually began to fade. In addition to worsening economic conditions that was associated with the decline in the global price of oil, large scale shortages of foodstuffs and other staple resources led to growing discontent amongst the people. As they began to speak out against Maduro's actions, it quickly became apparent that any dissent towards him would only be met with censorship and violence. Opposition groups to the main party were heavily persecuted and constantly under the watch of the government.

These issues along with the others listed below have all contributed to a Venezuela that is only a shadow of what it was in 2005, which is a major disappointment compared to what the international community believed that Venezuela would be in modern times. Maduro continues to attempt reformation in his nation, but the situation only continues to worsen.

Issues Facing the People of Venezuela

1. Inflation

At the time of the writing of this background guide, each singular US dollar is worth 119,900 Venezuelan bolivar. For a country that did not suffer from extreme inflation until very recently, this change has left many domestic consumers unable to acquire goods and has caused many domestic producers to go out of business. A stable economy cannot and will not develop without a stable currency. Many citizens must turn to the black market in order to purchase US dollars. This has become the de jour currency of the country, and it is very difficult to purchase anything without US dollars. Currently a 40" flat screen tv in caracas sells

for 5,889 US dollars compared to 426 US dollars in the United States. Many vendors have taken to weighing currency in order to determine how much is being paid for the goods. Even with the attempted inflation reform implemented by Maduro and the creation of a new government-backed cryptocurrency called petro, the economy has yet to make any move towards recovery. The petro was an attempt by Maduro to back a currency with a barrel of Venezuelan oil, meaning that you could exchange a barrel of oil for one petro coin. Many international groups opposed this action because it was an attempt to circumvent the economic sanctions implemented by a variety of organizations, which led to the many countries outlawing the use and purchase of the petro.

2. Lack of Access to Healthcare

According to a report by the Council on Foreign Relations, 85% of basic medicines are unavailable or difficult to obtain in Venezuela. Infant mortality rates have increased by 30% and maternal mortality rates are 65% higher than it was two years prior. One large issue within the medical realm that is no longer being addressed in Venezuela is the lack of vaccinations. Diseases thought to have once been eliminated from the region have resurfaced and are quickly spreading around the nation. Hospitals are unable to stay open due to lack of staff and inconsistent access to medicine, water, and power. Maduro's leadership style is very dependent on him seeming like the calm and omnipotent presence that Chavez used to always provide for the nation. In a part of his act to seem in control, he refuses to accept foreign medical aid that would allow for the treatment of thousands of his citizens. While very little aid is accepted, some does manage to reach the country through their few remaining allies, such as Russia, but it is not nearly enough to sate the needs of the thousands of people struggling with medical issues.

3. Lack of Access to Basic Resources

Lines at grocery stores in Caracas stretch around the corner as people desperately wait for food to be restocked. Many people in the region have turned to indoor gardening as an attempt to supplement their diets, yet it is often still not enough. Those individuals fortunate enough to live near Columbia cross the border to purchase food from Colombian markets, which in turn drives local prices up and causes a chaotic scramble across the border each day. Water supply is also spotty at best, and after water reaches the homes, it must be purified before consumption. Electricity is only consistent in the most wealthy of neighborhoods, and once it goes out, it could be weeks before power is restored. This again is an issue that could be partially resolved by the opening of Venezuela to foreign companies, charities, and other international aid. Malnutrition rates amongst children are some of the highest in the region. Before the beginning of the crisis, the only cases of child malnutrition seen in Venezuela were the result of neglect. However, the number of cases that come into Venezuela's pediatric hospital has tripled since 2015.

4. High Crime Rates

In 2016, murder rates rose to the highest ever seen in Venezuelan history with 91 deaths per 100,000 residents, a statistic that is especially concerning when compared to the global rate of 6.2 deaths per 100,000 that the UNODC reports. 73 Venezuelans die because of violent crime each day, and this number only continues to rise. In 2017, Venezuela saw an increase in most areas of crime— but particularly in violent crime. The government refutes and rejects claims that these crimes are occurring, however, neutral international observers denounce these claims as false. A think-tank based in Mexico City listed the ten most dangerous cities in the world with four of them being in Venezuela- the #1 spot being the capital, Caracas. These crimes only furthered the danger found on the streets of Venezuela with large scale protest being violently suppressed by police and paramilitary troops being deployed to control the populous. This just adds to the allure of leaving the country for safer and more comfortable living spaces.

5. Unfair Elections

Although Chavez was the uncontested leader of Venezuela for fourteen years, no evidence has ever come to

light that he was elected unfairly. The people of Venezuela largely loved the man and saw him as the person who brought them out of the darkness of the late 20th century. Maduro, however, does not have this same grace with his citizens. People have begun to turn on him as a result of the rapidly deteriorating situation, and now that evidence of a rigged election has amassed the people are furious. While protests have broken out all around the country in response, Maduro is showing no sign of resigning any time soon. These protests are easily suppressed with large shows of force and the appearance of control is maintained within the streets of Venezuela. In a recent election, the opposing groups were heavily criticized for boycotting the elections for it appeared that they stood a good chance at taking an unprecedented number of seats in the National Assembly and maybe even the presidency. These groups argued that their voice would be concealed and that their voting didn't matter. Even with these calls to boycott, some of the opposition did show up to the polls, and, when it resulted with their voices being suppressed and the rigging of the election, the criticisms of the opposition rang true.

6. Failure of Internal and External Markets

Stagnation of the Venezuelan market, along with obvious internal instability, has led to the abandonment of international firms and governments from doing business with Venezuela. Cheap oil is one of the only things that Venezuela can manage to sell on the international market and, because of the inability to develop foreign interest in other goods, many once prosperous firms have shut down or entered a period of financial turmoil. The countries lack of exports is also accompanied by a lack of imports that the service and retail industry in Venezuela heavily depended on in order to provide a consistent and high quality product. The internal industry required to produce many consumer goods simply does not exist in Venezuela, so now instead of having to rely on poorly made local products, the people have nothing to purchase at all even if they could find enough money. A lack of consumers and producers only leads to the deepening of the economic catastrophe that Venezuela is experiencing.

Case Study: The Venezuelan Diaspora

Since the start of Chavez's rule eighteen years ago, Venezuela has had over two million citizens flee the country. Between 1999 and 2013, anywhere from 400,000 to 450,000 Venezuelans fled to the United States, with an additional 300,000 Venezuelans flocking to Spain. According to the first global report of this migration phenomenon, 'Observatorio de la Voz de la Diáspora Venezolana,' the growth rate of Venezuela's emigration is so rapid it is almost impossible to keep the data up to date. As more and more people leave the country, however, it does not only affect Venezuela. The Colombian government recently announced that they will undertake efforts to conduct a census of the Venezuelan refugees in the country. A spokesperson from the Colombian government said that this is because "there is a need to formalize the services and aid, for this country is already providing (these services) to Venezuelans." This move by Colombia is accompanied by another policy that allows any Colombians living in Venezuela, along with the children of such people, that fled the region during Colombia's decades long civil war will now be allowed to return to the country and claim their citizenship.

The reasoning behind which people have made the decision to leave Venezuela has changed over time and is an interesting point to compare Chavez and Maduro on. During Chavez's time, the people who fled the country were likely upper class business owners and other prominent members of high society that catered to international capitalist powers. Maduro on the other hand has managed to drive out mostly middle and low class citizens who must flee the country in order to survive. This survival is not necessarily dependent on a political belief, but is more closely related to the fact that these citizens must constantly deal with a rapidly deteriorating quality of life. The rich that would have once been fleeing Venezuela are now the people who are the closest to Maduro and have no need to flee for he is providing for them.

As these people flee from their homes, very little is left for them to return to. Their jobs are gone, their property value is almost nonexistent, and any ties they have left in the country will likely follow them to a new nation. This permanent emigration out of Venezuela is leading to a future with a lack of a capable workforce, not only because of the number of emigrants but because of the type of people leaving. The poorest and uneducated citizens are unable to leave the country for they lack the means to navigate the tumultuous process. That leaves only the educated and wealthy people with the ability to escape, and, as a whole, this weakens the country. Many of the people who are being given the option to gain Colombian citizenship are finding employment, and assimilating to their new society. This “brain drain” is contributing to a largely untrained and unprepared workforce who will be tasked with rebuilding a post-Maduro Venezuela.

Case Study: July 30th National Constituent Assembly Elections

The Constituent Assembly of Venezuela was established in 1999 with the goal of giving the average person in Venezuela more political power. This body can not only change the constitution but also dismiss any official or institution from its governmental position of power. Technically, this assembly could even vote to not hold the upcoming presidential election and indefinitely extend Maduro’s rule of the region.

On July 30, 2017, Venezuelans all over their nation headed to the polls in the first major test of Maduro’s popularity since he became president in 2013. With growing discontent about Maduro, along with the socialist party growing in popularity, many expected sweeping changes to come to the country-- however, this was not the case. All 545 seats in the National Assembly were won by supporters of Maduro. In the previous fall governors election, 17 of 23 seats were won by Maduro’s supporters and the 90% of mayors in Venezuela who support Maduro. The government of Venezuela said that the purpose of this vote was to “bring peace to a conflicted country,” but is seen by outside observers as an attempt to circumvent regularly scheduled elections where the Maduro’s regime is expected to lose.

Quickly after the vote was held, it was realized that for the first time in the history of modern Venezuela something was different. The company that provided the software for voting issued a statement that at least 1 million out of the 8.1 million votes cast were illegitimate. This is the first concrete proof of illegitimate elections in Venezuela, and it was met with outrage by the international community.

No international observers were allowed at the polls, and since the election was largely boycotted by Maduro’s opposition few to no witnesses exist of this tampering. A majority of Latin American countries along with Spain, Canada, and the United States have stated that they will not recognize any decision made by this constituent assembly as valid until new fair elections have been held. In Peru, the government called for a meeting of regional foreign ministers to help design a cohesive stance towards Venezuela. Massive protest broke out in Caracas, yet those protests were quickly squashed by paramilitary police and the army. As this crisis and others deepen within the country, the need for international intervention increases; however, without the approval of the leaders of Venezuela this will not happen. There have been whispers within Venezuela about attempting to establish a new transitional government that will stabilize and restore the rule of law within the country, but for this to be successful international mediation between opposition and loyalist groups will be necessary.

The International Response

The international community has taken notice of Maduro's activities in Venezuela, and this has led to a variety of sanctions on the country— not only the US but the EU and Canada as well. However, this issue does not gain the same reaction from all nations. The United Nations Human Rights Council actually condemned the US and its allies for these sanctions in a resolution they adopted in March of 2017. This resolution states that these sanctions are targeted unfairly towards “the poor and most vulnerable classes,” and that they do not actually affect those who should be punished. This inability to decide on how to act against Venezuela has led to the continuation of the suffering of its peoples, and with international discourse and disagreement the situation can only degrade further.

Some nation's aid has been allowed into the country but the international humanitarian community is against the practice of Maduro not accepting outside neutral help. Many speculate this is because he does not want a realistic picture of the internal situation to be allowed to escape the poorest and most dangerous parts of the country, the very same region that these people would be attempting to help. Many neighbors are growing more and more discontent with the large number of Venezuelans coming into their countries and taxing the resources designed for citizens. This discontent is raising the already high tensions between Venezuela and its neighbors that have existed for centuries.

Recently, Venezuela attempted to annex part of neighboring Guyana in an attempt to secure additional oil resources and draw attention away from the crumbling internal situation of the country. The United Nations has been overseeing this conflict for some time and recently issued a statement that Venezuela has no legitimate claim to this land. Maduro rejected this claim and now the case has gone onward to the International Court of Justice. The result of this court can only be applied if both countries agree before the trial, but the chances of Venezuela respecting the court's decision, or even agreeing to the trial, are not high.

Questions to Consider

How can the sovereignty of Venezuela be preserved while rehabilitating the country?

What immediate changes must be made, and what issues can be dealt with at a later date?

What are the key causes of recession in the country and how can they be avoided in the future?

Useful Links:

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ve.html>

<https://www.macrotrends.net/1369/crude-oil-price-history-chart>

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

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