

HamMUN 2018

"Reflect the Past. Reshape the Future."

**UNITED NATIONS SECURITY
COUNCIL**

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WELCOME LETTER

Hello,

We, Sahajanya Balaganesh and Marcus Dörfel, are super excited to be serving as your chairs for United Nations (UN) Security Council at HamMUN 2018. We eagerly look forward to this committee because of its extremely important and interesting topics (hence why it's being debated at UNSC!). A little about us - Sahajanya, although originally Indian, just has to cross the border from Brussels to come to Paris. She has been involved in various public speaking scenarios for the past decade and has just completed her mandate as President of the Model UN society of her university. Saha takes all-in-or-nothing too seriously and has been in the public speaking/debating scene for over 12 years now.

If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to us on Facebook or email us. See you in November!

Best,
Sahajanya and Marcus

INTRODUCTION TO THE COMMITTEE

The Security Council is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations and it consists of 15 members. The permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, which possess a right of veto, are China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States. Aside from the permanent five (P5), the Security Council for 2018 consists of Bolivia, Cote d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Netherlands, Peru, Poland and Sweden.

The Security Council's primary responsibility is the maintenance of international peace and security (UN Charter, Article 24). The Security Council takes the lead in determining the existence of a threat to the peace or act of aggression. It calls upon the parties to a dispute to settle it by peaceful means and recommends methods of adjustment or terms of settlement¹. In some cases, the Security Council can resort to imposing sanctions or even authorize the use of force to maintain or restore international peace and security.

At HamMUN 2018, we will be discussing the question of Kurdistan and the current situation in Venezuela. Although the Kurdish referendum voted in favour of independence, not much has evolved since to process the independence, but Iraq continues to cut budget to the region and Daesh (or the Islamic State) is still a huge problem. In Venezuela, Nicolas Maduro is presiding over a situation deteriorating exponentially every day and there seems to be no solution in sight. Although these are situations evolve every day, please keep in mind that this study guide was written in August 2018 with the latest information available, but the committee will be set in December 2018.

¹ "Functions and Powers of the United Nations Security Council." Welcome to the United Nations. Accessed September 22, 2018. <http://www.un.org/en/sc/about/functions.shtml>.

TOPIC A: THE QUESTION OF KURDISTAN

There is a saying among the Kurds: “No friends but the mountains”. These once nomadic tribes have been driven away by conqueror after conqueror, living at the crossroads of the world from the very beginning, setting the fight to a self-determined life as the focal point of the Kurdish destiny.

THE HISTORY AND BACKGROUND OF THE TOPIC

THE KURDS

*“The Kurds are a stateless people scattered over Turkey, Iran, Syria, Iraq and Armenia”.*²

Today, the Kurds are a distinct ethnic community that is connected through race, culture and language³. They originated from Mesopotamia, but in the 7th century C.E, the mountain tribes converted to Islam⁴. Currently there exist between 25 and 35 million Kurds,⁵ which makes them the fourth-largest ethnic group in the Middle East, straddle in the borders of those States. They are divided by two forms of Islam, five borders, and three Kurdish languages and alphabets. Although, the Kurds share a distinct ethnicity, they have never been given their own nation-state⁶. It was in the early 20th century that the idea was formulated to create a homeland for the Kurds⁷.

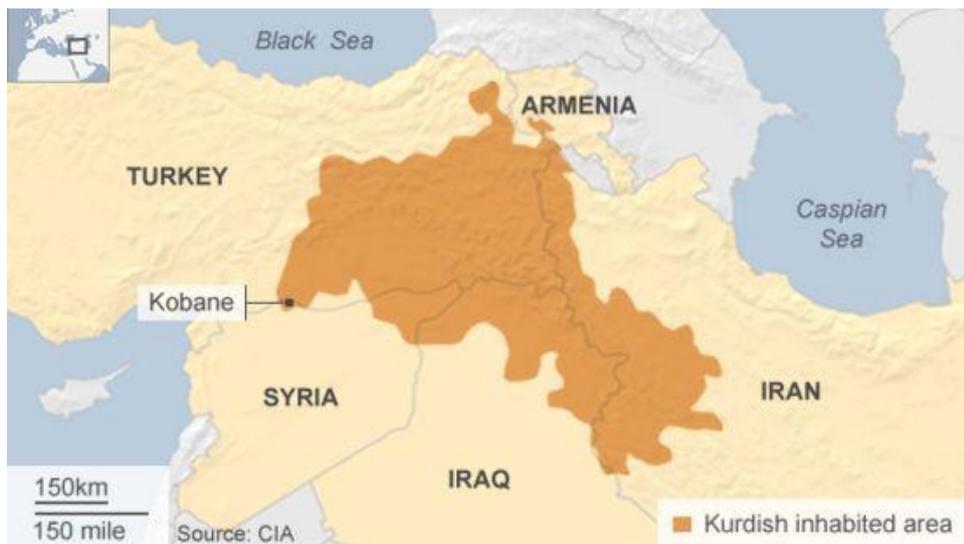


Figure 1:

After World War One, the victorious Western allies made provision for a Kurdish State in the 1920 Treaty of Sevres. However, the Treaty of Lausanne neglected that provision three

² Samantha Power

³ "Who Are The Kurds?", *BBC News*, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29702440>.

⁴ "Kurd | History, Culture, & Language", *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Kurd>.

⁵ "Who Are The Kurds?", *BBC News*, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29702440>.

⁶ *Ibid.*,

⁷ *Ibid.*,

years later, when it set the boundaries of modern Turkey, without considering a Kurdish State⁸. This left the Kurds as minority status within the borders of the countries that they resided. Since then, for the past 80 years, the attempt by the Kurds to establish their own independent nation has been repressed. Furthermore, the Kurds have been more fragmented with individual movements arising from within the larger Kurdish group⁹.

THE KURDS IN TURKEY

Although it is not known exactly how many Kurdish live in Turkey, there might be up to 19 percent of them¹⁰. There are some Kurdish factions, such as the Alevi Kurds who have “adopted secular Turkish identity”¹¹, who have “integrated into the country’s overall population”¹². This lack of integration goes back to when the Turkish Republic was established in 19th century where the “Kurds stood in a unique position vis-à-vis Turkish nationalism” because “the distance of Ottoman rulers left them with enough of their ethnic identity to prevent their assimilation into the new proud Turkish ethnicity”¹³. Despite these certain factions within the Kurdish in Turkey, there are still some Kurdish groups within Turkey who remain apart from the Turkish society. This remains a problem within Turkey as these Kurds have mobilized into the Kurdistan Worker’s Party (PKK) and Kurdish militants who are not afraid to use violence. This has created conflict between the Turkish government and the PKK who fight for an independent Kurdish state¹⁴.

THE PKK

The Kurdistan Worker’s Party (PKK) was formed in the late 1970s, aiming to set up an independent Kurdish State within Turkey. They led an armed struggle against the Turkish government in 1984, but that was stopped with a ceasefire that only ended in July 2015¹⁵. Since then, the PKK has been in conflict against the Turkish government. There is a distinct conflict on ideological grounds as the Turkish government believes that the PKK are “trying to create a separate state in Turkey” while the PKK have emphasized they merely strive to live “within the borders of Turkey on their own land freely”¹⁶. Although, it should be noted that the original aims of the PKK appear to remain the same, their measures used to achieve their ultimate goal have been rather violent. Since the establishment of the PKK and this struggle, over “40000 people have died in the conflict”¹⁷. For these reasons Turkey, the EU as well as the United States (U.S.) have listed the PKK as a terrorist organization.¹⁸

⁸ Ibid.,

⁹ “Kurd | History, Culture, & Language”, *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Kurd>.

¹⁰ “The World Factbook — Central Intelligence Agency”, *Cia.Gov*, 2018, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/tu.html>.

¹¹ Soner Cagaptay and Cem Yolbulan, “The Kurds In Turkey: A Gloomy Future”, *Washingtoninstitute.Org*, 2016, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-kurds-in-turkey-a-gloomy-future>.

¹² Soner Cagaptay and Cem Yolbulan, “The Kurds In Turkey: A Gloomy Future”, *Washingtoninstitute.Org*, 2016, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-kurds-in-turkey-a-gloomy-future>.

¹³ Ibid.,

¹⁴ Greg Bruno, “Inside The Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK)”, *Council On Foreign Relations*, 2007, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/inside-kurdistan-workers-party-pkk>.

¹⁵ “Who Are Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) Rebels?”, *BBC News*, 2016, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-20971100>.

¹⁶ Ibid.,

¹⁷ Ibid.,

¹⁸ Joost Hiltermann, “The Fate Of The Syrian Kurds Is In Assad’s Hands”, *The Atlantic*, 2018, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/08/syria-kurds-assad-ypg-isis-iraq/569029/>.

THE KURDS IN IRAN

The Kurds make up about 10% of the population in Iran, but remain less vocal about gaining political influence within the country compared to the other Kurdish groups in the neighbouring countries. Though the “Iranian regime continues to execute dozens to hundreds of Kurdish dissidents”, the Iranian Kurds have not “sought to change their fate”¹⁹. This remains puzzling because in January 1946, “the Republic of Kurdistan was declared in Mahabad” though this only lasted a month short of a year. This experience has shaped the Kurdish movement for independence and there have been “armed clashes” with the Iranian government. Compared to the other Kurdish groups in Iraq, Syria and Turkey, the Kurdish have not been able to establish itself into a strong enough movement.²⁰ This is due to the fact that the Kurdish political parties have been in exile for decades and has created a disconnect between the political parties and the Iranian Kurds still living in the country.²¹

THE KURDS IN IRAQ

When the 1926 Anglo-Iraq Treaty was passed, the Kurds were given hope that they would be granted autonomy within the country when Prime Minister, Abd al-Muhsin al-Sa’dun, stated, “We should give the Kurds their rights. Their officials should be from among them: their tongue should be their official language”²². By 1930, there was no concrete result by the Iraqi government and the Kurds’ “special regime and limited autonomy” given by the Treaty of Sevres had been taken away. In 1961, the Kurdish Democratic Party, established in 1946, began to rebel in northern Iraq, which the Iraqi government responded to by dissolving them. In March 11 1970, the Iraqi government and the Kurds agreed to a peace agreement, which outlined the Kurd’s autonomy in northern Iraq. This agreement stated that Kurdish was “an official language” and that the “Iraqi people [were] made up of two nationalities: the Arab nationality and the Kurdish nationality”²³.

In January 1972, there was a rebellion in northern Iraq where the United States of America, Iran and Israel “provided military assistance to the rebels”.²⁴ In part, the United States government began to fund these rebels because they saw the Baath Party (led by Saddam Hussein) as a “threat”. The government responded by repressing the rebellion and creating a new autonomy plan, which the KDP rejected.²⁵ Hostilities were resumed between the government and the Kurds and on April 1974, “eleven members of the KDP were executed by the government”.²⁶ Conflict continued throughout 1974 and into 1975 where 200,000 Kurds were deported from northern Iraq to southern Iraq.²⁷

¹⁹ Galip Dalay, “Why Iranian Kurdish Groups Remain Politically Weak”, *Foreign Affairs*, 2017, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/persian-gulf/2017-09-01/why-iranian-kurdish-groups-remain-politically-weak>.

²⁰ Ibid.,

²¹ Ibid.,

²² Peter Sluglett, “British Colonialism And The Kurds In Iraq: 1926-1930”, *Globalpolicy.Org*, 1976, <https://www.globalpolicy.org/component/content/article/169/36382.html>.

²³ “Kurdish People Fast Facts”, *Edition-M.Cnn.Com*, 2018, <https://edition-m.cnn.com/2014/08/18/world/kurdish-people-fast-facts/index.html?r=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F>.

²⁴ “18. Iraq/Kurds (1932-Present)”, *Uca.Edu*, 2018, <http://uca.edu/politicalscience/dadm-project/middle-eastnorth-africapersian-gulf-region/iraqkurds-1932-present/>.

²⁵ Ibid.,

²⁶ Ibid.,

²⁷ Ibid.,

Iraq invaded Iran in September in 1980, which gave some respite to the Kurdish political parties (KDP and PUK).²⁸ The war with Iran was crucial to the Iraqi government as an “Iranian victory ... presented an existential threat” and therefore, “saw the Kurd’s growing insurgency as capital treason and Kurdistan as the Achille’s heel of its military defence”.²⁹ In 1987, Iran started to show “fatigue”, which pushed the Iraqi government to decide to “squellch the Kurdish insurgency”.³⁰ Saddam Hussein appointed Ali Hassan al-Majid to take control over northern Iraq with the ability to take extreme measures against the Kurds. Three weeks later, he “ordered the use of poison gas”, which was used to “‘smoke out’ the Kurdish guerrillas from their bases in the country side”³¹.

Part of al-Majid’s strategy was to make northern Iraq inhabitable and by the summer of 1987, villages in the lowlands were practically all destroyed. His forces were unable to reach the highlands and these became areas that could be attacked from the air in order to “starve the countryside and induce villagers to leave”.³² In 1988, the Iraqi government enacted the Anfal campaign, which was a “large-scale military operation” that consisted of “firing chemical rounds and dropping chemical bombs”.³³ The Kurdish had adapted to these conditions and in response looked to partner with Iran in order to fight back against the Iraqi government.

On March 16th, the Iraqi government enacted a “massive chemical strike against” the Kurdish in Halabja and Khurmala, which left approximately 5,000 dead (mostly civilians).³⁴ This attack broke the “Kurdish resolve” and further encouraged the government to continue with its campaign. After the first Anfal operation, six more stages occurred. It is estimated that 100,000 died in total.³⁵

Following the defeat in Kuwait in 1990, the “Kurdish national movement gained a new lease on life” where the KDP and the PUK agreed to share power after elections were held in May 1992.³⁶ This led to a civil war between the KDP and the PUK between 1994-1998 and has since led to their agreement that an united front was necessary against the Iraqi government.³⁷ With the establishment of their own regional government, the Kurds were targeted with “trade sanctions” by the Iraqi government; furthermore, the international community included their region when targeting Iraq with a trade embargo.³⁸ It was only in 2003, after the collapse of Saddam Hussein’s regime in Iraq, that the Kurdish region in northern Iraq could begin to rebuild.³⁹

²⁸ Hiltermann Joost, “The 1988 Anfal Campaign In Iraqi Kurdistan | Sciences Po Mass Violence And Resistance - Research Network”, *Sciencespo.Fr*, 2003, <https://www.sciencespo.fr/mass-violence-war-massacre-resistance/en/document/1988-anfal-campaign-iraqi-kurdistan>.

²⁹ *Ibid.*,

³⁰ *Ibid.*,

³¹ *Ibid.*,

³² *Ibid.*,

³³ *Ibid.*,

³⁴ *Ibid.*,

³⁵ *Ibid.*,

³⁶ I Hiltermann Joost, “The 1988 Anfal Campaign In Iraqi Kurdistan | Sciences Po Mass Violence And Resistance - Research Network”, *Sciencespo.Fr*, 2003, <https://www.sciencespo.fr/mass-violence-war-massacre-resistance/en/document/1988-anfal-campaign-iraqi-kurdistan>.

³⁷ *Ibid.*,

³⁸ Jane Arraf, “What To Know About The Independence Referendum In Iraqi Kurdistan”, *Npr.Org*, 2017, <https://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2017/09/22/552571060/what-to-know-about-the-independence-referendum-in-iraqi-kurdistan>.

³⁹ *Ibid.*,

Today, there are about “6 million Kurds – almost 20 percent of the Iraqi population”⁴⁰ -- in Iraq. The Kurds have many reasons for wanting to be independent in Iraq, but part of that is due to the actions taken by Saddam Hussein’s regime. There is a growing sentiment that the Kurds will “never feel safe” if they remain a part of Iraq because they believe that “they will always face threats from an Iraqi Arab government”.⁴¹ Furthermore, the Kurds have been impacted by the rise of the Islamic State (IS) and they wish to “control their own economy”, which has led to conflict between the Iraqi government and the Kurdish government.⁴²

THE KURDS IN SYRIA

In Syria, there are approximately 2.5 million Kurds who speak both Kurdish and Arabic and “many...have at least partially assimilated into Arab society”.⁴³ The Kurdish community in Syria originated in Kurd Dagh and Jarablus; these communities have assimilated more into Arab culture than Kurds from other areas.⁴⁴ The Kurds from Jazira are mainly Kurdish who fled “the Turkish Republic during the repression there in the 1920s” and are the reason for much of the “national awareness and tension” within the country”.⁴⁵

From 1958 to 1976, the Kurdish were repressed by the Syrian government due to their “close identity with the Syrian Communist Party”⁴⁶ where they were “arrested, imprisoned and tortured”.⁴⁷ During this period, the Kurdish in Jazira were labelled as foreigners and soon after, 60,000 Kurds migrated for Damascus.⁴⁸ Under Hafez al-Assad, the Kurds were still repressed but less so.

The Syrian government supported the Kurds in both Turkey and Iraq during their political movements and in 1990, “politically active and nationalist Kurds were elected to the Syrian Parliament”.⁴⁹ This did not impact Kurdish repression as that continued despite the election of Kurds into the Syrian government. In 2003, with the events in Iraq, the relationship between Syria and Turkey improved due to their fear that the Kurds could make “territorial claims” on both of them.⁵⁰ The situation deteriorated in 2004 with a clash between Arab and Kurdish football fans led to “Syrian security forces in Qamishli opening fire on crowds for two days”.⁵¹ This resulted in “Kurdish anti-government riots” throughout the country where “38 people” killed and 1,000 were detained.⁵² Though the situation was de-escalated over the next few months, the Syrian government decided to put a ban on all Kurdish political activities.⁵³ Since then, there have been several conflicts between the Kurds and the Syrian government. Many of these events have led to the deaths of Kurdish people.

The Syrian government, in October 2008, “issued Decree 49” that sought to “evict” the people living along the Syrian border areas.⁵⁴ With this decree, the Kurdish are prohibited

⁴⁰ Ibid.,

⁴¹ Ibid.,

⁴² Ibid.,

⁴³ “Kurds - Minority Rights Group”, *Minority Rights Group*, 2018, <https://minorityrights.org/minorities/kurds-5/>.

⁴⁴ Ibid.,

⁴⁵ Ibid.,

⁴⁶ Ibid.,

⁴⁷ Ibid.,

⁴⁸ Ibid.,

⁴⁹ Ibid.,

⁵⁰ Ibid.,

⁵¹ Ibid.,

⁵² Kurds - Minority Rights Group”, *Minority Rights Group*, 2018, <https://minorityrights.org/minorities/kurds-5/>.

⁵³ Ibid.,

⁵⁴ Ibid.,

from buying, selling and bequeathing property.⁵⁵ More violent clashes between the Syrian government and the Kurds occurred between 2008 and 2011, which was only exacerbated by similar conflicts in Turkey and Iraq. Early 2011 saw a relative peace between the Assad government and the Kurdish as the government reached “a rapprochement with the Democratic Union Party, the Syrian branch of the Kurdish Workers’ Party”⁵⁶. Yet in April 2011, the Assad government issued “Decree No. 49”, which allowed the Kurds to claim citizenship; though this required “an interview with the state security apparatus and possible military conscription”⁵⁷. Due to this requirement, many Kurds chose not to take Syrian citizenship.

In 2003, the Kurdish forces were able to take control of towns and villages under the control of “al-Qaeda affiliated militias” and this led to the Kurdish Democratic Union Party (KDUP) to declare that they would begin taking steps towards self-rule of these regions⁵⁸. In January 2014, the Interim Transitional Administration was established in Jazira, Kobane and Afrin⁵⁹. These steps allowed for the Kurdish in Syria to be able to establish an “autonomous administration, known as Rojava in Kurdish”⁶⁰ In this autonomous administration has implemented policies that allow the right to linguistics and religion with their official languages being Kurdish, Arabic and Aramaic⁶¹. In March 2016, Rojava was proclaimed as a federal region and renamed “the Democratic Federal System of Northern Syria”⁶². As of March 2018, the Syrian government and the Syrian National Coalition (the opposition party) have not acknowledged the legitimacy of the federal region⁶³.

THE KURDS AND THE WAR AGAINST ISIS

PESHMERGA- THOSE WHO FACE DEATH

Kurdish security forces, called Peshmerga, have been an instrumental part of the fight against the Islamic State, working both independently and as part of the US-led coalition. The Peshmerga emerged as a “national fighting force” for the Kurdish after World War I⁶⁴. The emergence of the Peshmerga rose with the rising Kurdish nationalist movement that sought for independence⁶⁵. It was after 1998, with the agreement between the two Kurdish factions to present an united front, that the Peshmerga’s relationship with the United States of America developed⁶⁶. In fact, the Peshmerga were critical to the success of ousting Saddam Hussein⁶⁷ and they have continued to play a role in the fight against ISIS.

FIGHTING ISIS IN IRAQ AND SYRIA

⁵⁵ Ibid.,

⁵⁶ Ibid.,

⁵⁷ Ibid.,

⁵⁸ Ibid.,

⁵⁹ Ibid.,

⁶⁰ Ibid.,

⁶¹ Ibid.,

⁶² Ibid.,

⁶³ Ibid.,

⁶⁴ “Profile: Who Are The Peshmerga?”, *BBC News*, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-28738975>.

⁶⁵ Ibid.,

⁶⁶ Ibid.,

⁶⁷ Ibid.,

In mid-2013, the Islamic State (IS or otherwise known as ISIS) attempted to take control of “three Kurdish enclaves that bordered control in northern Syria”.⁶⁸ Throughout the rest of the year, they repeatedly attacked the territory until the middle of 2014 when they were “repelled by the People’s Protection Units (YPG) – the armed wing of the Syrian Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD)”⁶⁹. Following this, the Islamic State moved into northern Iraq, which brought the Kurds into the conflict. The autonomous northern Kurdish Region “sent its Peshmerga forces to areas abandoned by the Iraqi army”⁷⁰. In August 2014, the IS attacked several towns, such as Sinjar, that were home to religious minorities and where they killed or captured “thousands of Yazidis”⁷¹. In response, the Peshmerga joined the U.S. multi-national coalition in the fight against the Islamic forces⁷². This included the YPG and the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) who had bases in Iraq. Another concern expressed was over Iraqi sovereignty, which has been threatened by the expansion of the Islamic State throughout the country over the last three years. The Iraqi cities of Mosul and Fallujah, among others, were completely taken over by ISIS and only liberated recently. The government of Iraq declared victory over ISIS in July of this year, although its army continues with offensives to push out ISIS militants.

The situation, in September 2014, drew the Kurdish further into the conflict with the IS attacking an enclave near the “northern Syrian Kurdish town of Kobane”, which forced “tens of thousands of people to flee across the nearby Turkish border”⁷³. Despite the close proximity, the Turkish government did not allow the Turkish Kurds to cross into Syria in order to defend it⁷⁴. It was only in January 2015 that the Kurdish forces in Syria were able to retake Kobane from the IS. Since 2015, the Kurdish forces have joined the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in order to aid the “U.S-led coalition airpower”, which has re-established control over “hundreds of kilometres along the border with Turkey”⁷⁵. The Islamic State’s control over territory in Syria was eradicated in October 2017 with the capture of Raqqa by the SDF. This has resulted in Kurdish forces coming into direct contact with Russian supported Syrian government forces and the rebels backed by Turkey, which has caused major tensions for the world powers⁷⁶.

The war against the IS was a beacon of hope for the Kurds as they were “bolstered by alliances” with the West, which perhaps led them to believe that their desire for an independent state would be given. Instead, the Western powers abandoned their proxies who had been used to fight against the jihadist group (IS). In fact, the post-war against the IS has left the Kurdish in a tenuous position and led them to “abandon their cautious strategy to achieve independence in hope that American support would allow them to ... [overcome the] hurdles” in front of them⁷⁷.

⁶⁸ Who Are The Kurds?, *BBC News*, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29702440>.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*,

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*,

⁷¹ *Ibid.*,

⁷² *Ibid.*,

⁷³ *Ibid.*,

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*,

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*,

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*,

⁷⁷ Joost Hiltermann and Maria Fantappie, “Twilight Of The Kurds”, *Foreign Policy*, 2018, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/01/16/twilight-of-the-kurds-iraq-syria-kurdistan/>.

HISTORIC TIMELINE OF INTERNATIONAL ACTION

1920: Provision for a Kurdish state in the Treaty of Sevres

1923: Treaty of Lausanne, setting the nation states' boundaries without granting the Kurds their own state territory

January 1946: Formal appeal to the UN for Kurdish self-determination and sovereignty

August 26, 1988: After "*Bloody Friday*", initiated by Saddam Hussein, UNSC Res. 620 condemning the Iraqi use of chemical warfare against Iraqi Kurds in Halabja

April 5, 1991: United Nation Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 688 condemning the repression of the Iraqi civilian population in Kurdish populated areas, demanding Iraq to stop
In the following years the US used this SC Resolution to justify first its temporary creation of a safe haven for the Kurds in Northern Iraq and then its enforcement of a no-fly zone over the area

1992- 2005: Under the protection of the US, the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) was able to develop around 1992, until it was finally recognized by the new Iraqi Constitution adopted in October 2005 as a federal state within Northern Iraq

April 14, 1995: UNSC Resolution 986 authorized Iraq to sell a limited amount of oil for food and other humanitarian needs, thus partially lifting the economic sanctions that had been imposed since the first Gulf War

February 20, 1998: UNSC Resolution 1153 increased the permitted amount of oil sales to \$5.256 billion every 6 months: The Iraqi Kurdistan region received 13% of the funds from the sale of this oil -> economic development in the region

March 18, 2011: UN international conference in Geneva on the legal recognition of the crimes of genocide committed against the Kurds in Iraq

September 21/25, 2017: Secretary-General António Guterres and the United Nations Security Council expressed concern over the Kurdish Referendum and the potential destabilization that it could cause. Emphasizes that the issue should be resolved through "structured dialogue and constructive compromise"⁷⁸

⁷⁸ "UN Chief Voices Concern Over 'Potentially Destabilizing Effects' Of Kurdish Referendum", *UN News*, 2017, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2017/09/567012-un-chief-voices-concern-over-potentially-destabilizing-effects-kurdish>.

THE CURRENT SITUATION

IRAQ

While the Kurds have been effectively self-governing for several years in northern Iraq, an official vote for independence was only held for the first time in September 2017. Even though a vote had been planned for 2014, it had to be postponed due to the war in Iraq and Syria. On September 25th 2017 northern Iraq held a referendum on whether the recognized independent Kurdish Region, governed by the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG), within Iraq should become fully independent.



Independence referendum in Duhuk, Iraq (photo credit: REUTERS)

Even though the Security Council voiced a unanimous concern that the referendum would potentially harm the international tensions in the area, 92% of the 3.3 million Kurds and non-Kurds supported the secession of the Kurdish region into an autonomous Kurdistan⁷⁹. The Security Council said that such a vote would be "destabilizing" to Iraq,⁸⁰ which has disintegrated since the war against IS began there three years ago. While the Iraqi military had been successful in retaking cities captured by IS, the war is far from over, and the country will have to rebuild many of its cities and re-establish infrastructure in order to fully recover. Nevertheless, the Security Council did not condemn the referendum or call for its cancellation.

The Iraqi government, however, called the referendum illegal and non-binding. Their response was to send federal troops to reclaim Baghdad's authority by taking back territory that they had lost to Peshmerga fighters when the IS initially attacked Iraq⁸¹. In October 2017, the Iraqi forces continued to move into northern and eastern Iraq as they reclaimed

⁷⁹ Harry Cockburn, "UN Offers To Help Resolve Iraq's Kurdish Independence Crisis", *The Independent*, 2017, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/un-help-resolve-baghdad-iraq-kurdistan-kurdish-referendum-crisis-syria-a7972911.html>.

⁸⁰ "Iraq: Security Council Voices Concern Over Planned Referendum In Kurdistan Region", *UN News*, 2017, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2017/09/566282-iraq-security-council-voices-concern-over-planned-referendum-kurdistan-region>.

⁸¹ Joost Hiltermann and Maria Fantappie, "Twilight Of The Kurds", *Foreign Policy*, 2018, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/01/16/twilight-of-the-kurds-iraq-syria-kurdistan/>.

more territory than what “the Kurds had seized in 2014”⁸². The referendum saw many of the Iraqi Kurd’s allies leave them to their fate.

Iran withdrew its Shiite groups in the face of the Iraqi forces, especially since they did not support the break-up of Iraq⁸³. Turkey reacted by threatening to close its border near the Kurdish northern region and remained silent as Iran made a deal with the Iraqi government to “push back against the Kurds”⁸⁴. A move that made strategic sense as the Turkish government had long been concerned about how a “secessionist sentiment” could affect its own Kurdish population⁸⁵. Finally, the United States of America “took no action” when the Iraqi government made a deal with the PUK to take control of the Kirkuk oil fields and even vocally expressed that the Kurdish should “not proceed with a referendum”⁸⁶. This has left the Iraqi Kurds in a tenuous place as the oil field is crucial to their independence. Without the Kirkuk oil fields, the Iraqi Kurds are now reliant on the Iraqi government for income. This referendum has put the Kurdish population in Iraq in a difficult situation and one that does not seem will result in an independent state.

SYRIA

In Syria, there have been preliminary talks, as of July 2018, between the Syrian Democratic Council (SDC) – the political faction of the SDF – and the Assad government in order to negotiate a “new democratic, decentralised Syria”⁸⁷. Despite these negotiations, it appears that the Assad regime remains inflexible and continues to vocally express his intention to “reclaim ‘every inch’ of Syrian territory”⁸⁸. This, of course, includes the Rojava. The Syrian Kurds are discovering, similar to their Iraqi counter-parts, that their effort in the War against IS does not mean that the U.S will support their bid for autonomy, much less independence⁸⁹. It is especially precarious considering that the Kurdish People’s Protection Units (YPG) are affiliated with the PKK whom are considered terrorists by Turkey, the U.S and the European Union⁹⁰. Furthermore, when it comes to these negotiations, they may not result in a positive outcome as the Assad forces are “primed to move on Idlib, the final rebel holdout” because the Assad government “needs the YPG-held region’s vast wheat fields and oil fields ... to rebuild”⁹¹. An independent Kurdish State could be detrimental to the Assad regime’s intention to gain full control of Syria again, which puts the Kurds in a tense situation.

This is even more true as Turkey continues to be opposed to an independent Kurdish state, which means that any the YPG and their desire for an independent region in Syria threatens Turkish territory. In fact, in February 2018 saw “Turkey forces [invade] the Kurdish district of Afrin in northwest Syria”, which both Russia and the U.S simply allowed to happen. The

⁸² Ibid.,

⁸³ Ibid.,

⁸⁴ Ibid.,

⁸⁵ Joost Hiltermann and Maria Fantappie, “Twilight Of The Kurds”, *Foreign Policy*, 2018, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/01/16/twilight-of-the-kurds-iraq-syria-kurdistan/>.

⁸⁶ Ibid.,

⁸⁷ “Syria’s Kurds Hope For ‘New State And System’ Via Assad Talks”, *Aljazeera.Com*, 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/07/syria-kurds-hope-state-system-assad-talks-180728170524768.html>.

⁸⁸ Joost Hiltermann, “The Fate Of The Syrian Kurds Is In Assad’s Hands”, *The Atlantic*, 2018, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/08/syria-kurds-assad-ypg-isis-iraq/569029/>.

⁸⁹ Ibid.,

⁹⁰ Ibid.,

⁹¹ Ibid.,

Syrian Kurds now fear that a similar situation will occur in the northeast because “Turkey has said it wants to drive them out”⁹²

TURKEY

The situation between the Turkish government and the PKK deteriorated in July 2015 when the peace talks between the two groups broke down⁹³. This occurred because the two year cease-fire “collapsed following a suicide bombing by suspected Islamic State militants killed nearly thirty Kurds near the Syrian border”⁹⁴. The PKK believed that the Turkish government had not acted quick enough to prevent the attack on the Kurdish civilians⁹⁵. Furthermore, the relationship between Turkey and the Kurdish population has become more tense over the last year, especially with the Syrian Kurds. Since 2016, there have been increased clashes between the Turkish government and the various Kurdish groups – the PKK, the Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP) and the YPG (who have ties with the PKK)⁹⁶. The 2016 coup that was attempted against President Recep Tayyip Erdogan led to “increased air strikes on PKK militants in Turkey and extended operations into Syria to battle the YPG and the self-declared Islamic State with ground troops”⁹⁷. Over the last year, there have been a violent clashes between the Turkish forces and the PKK. The most recent was in June 2018 when Kurdish forces attacked the Turkish military in the southeast region of the country, which led to a retaliation by the Turkish military in northern Iraq that killed ten Kurdish militants⁹⁸.

As of October 2018, there has been no movement towards returning to peace talks between the Turkish government and the PKK. In fact, the Turkish government enacted an operation that “detained ninety people with suspected ties to the banned PKK”⁹⁹. With rising tensions in the country with the Kurds, it is no surprise that the Turkish government is concerned with what the establishment of an independent state in Syria could do to their own conflict with the PKK. Their invasion into Afrin, Syria only increases the tensions within the region and their conflict with the Kurds.

KEY QUESTIONS

- What is the right to self-determination and in how far is it relevant for the Kurds in the context of their struggle for independence?
- How far does the right of self-determination go? Does it have an external dimension and if so, do the Kurds have a human right to found their own state?
- What would the state boundaries of a Kurdistan look like? And how can state boundaries be determined?
- What would be the mandatory legal steps to lay the basis for the creation of a Kurdistan? What would be other mandatory (diplomatic) steps?

⁹² Ibid.,

⁹³ Global Conflict Tracker", *Cfr. Org*, 2018, https://www.cfr.org/interactives/global-conflict-tracker?cid=ppc-Google-grant-conflict_tracker-031116&gclid=EAlalQobChMI9__1wr2-2AIVQmYbCh3seAbeEAAYASAAEgKljfD_BwE#!/conflict/conflict-between-turkey-and-armed-kurdish-groups.

⁹⁴ Ibid.,

⁹⁵ Ibid.,

⁹⁶ Ibid.,

⁹⁷ "Global Conflict Tracker", *Cfr. Org*, 2018, https://www.cfr.org/interactives/global-conflict-tracker?cid=ppc-Google-grant-conflict_tracker-031116&gclid=EAlalQobChMI9__1wr2-2AIVQmYbCh3seAbeEAAYASAAEgKljfD_BwE#!/conflict/conflict-between-turkey-and-armed-kurdish-groups.

⁹⁸ Ibid.,

⁹⁹ Ibid.,

- How do the fight against IS and internal conflicts between Sunnites and Shia play into the granting of an independent state?
- Possibility of a second referendum that is supported by the Iraqi government?
- If the Kurds became independent in Northern Iraq, would the conflict be solved? How do the PKK and other Kurds outside of the Iraqi region play into this?

SUGGESTED READING

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- <https://www.sciencespo.fr/mass-violence-war-massacre-resistance/en/document/1988-anfal-campaign-iraqi-kurdistan>
- <https://www.bbc.com/news/in-pictures-35967389>
- <http://austria.gov.krd/en/aktuelle-lage-in-der-region-kurdistan/>
- https://www.cfr.org/interactives/global-conflict-tracker?cid=ppc-Google-grant-conflict_tracker-031116&gclid=EAlaIQobChMI9__1wr2-2AIVQmYbCh3seAbeEAAYASAAEgKLjFD_BwE#!/conflict/conflict-between-turkey-and-armed-kurdish-groups
- <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/inside-kurdistan-workers-party-pkk>
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- <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/persian-gulf/2017-09-01/why-iranian-kurdish-groups-remain-politically-weak>
- <https://edition-m.cnn.com/2014/08/18/world/kurdish-people-fast-facts/index.html?r=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F>
- <https://www.mepc.org/journal/kurds-iraq-0>
- <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/22/world/middleeast/iraq-kurds-agreement.html>
- <http://theconversation.com/why-iraqi-kurdistan-could-be-on-the-brink-of-revolution-94190>
- https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2017/10/17/the-long-winding-history-of-american-dealings-with-iraqs-kurds-2/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.28f2626ff0f4
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- <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jan/15/turkey-condemns-us-plan-for-syrian-border-security-force>
- <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/08/syria-kurds-assad-ypg-isis-iraq/569029/>
- <https://www.vox.com/cards/things-about-isis-you-need-to-know/who-are-the-kurds>
- <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/turkey-cannot-effectively-fight-isis-unless-it-makes-peace-with-the-kurds/>
- <http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/article/trouble-turkey-erdogan-isis-and-kurds>
- <https://www.mepc.org/iraq-syria-isis-and-kurds-geostrategic-concerns-us-and-turkey>
- <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/syria/2016-08-08/kurds-isis>
- <https://www-m.cnn.com/2017/09/27/middleeast/kurdish-independent-state/index.html?r=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F>

- <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/gulf-and-arabian-peninsula/iraq/arming-iraq-s-kurds-fighting-inviting-conflict>
- <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/opeds/Cagaptay20160810-ISPI.pdf>
- <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/04/18/when-diplomacy-disappears-counterterrorism-isis-syria-turkey-kurds-ypg-pkk-erdogan-trump/>
- <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2018/country-chapters/turkey>
- <https://www.ft.com/content/3f8a0d50-2132-11e8-a895-1ba1f72c2c11>
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- <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/markaz/2016/03/30/iraq-situation-report-part-iii-kurdistan/>
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TOPIC B: THE SITUATION IN VENEZUELA

HISTORY OF THE TOPIC

TIMELINE¹⁰⁰

1521 - Spanish colonisation begins on the north-east coast.

1749 - First rebellion against Spanish colonial rule.

1810 - Venezuelans take advantage of Napoleon's invasion of Spain to declare independence.

1829-30 - Venezuela secedes from Gran Colombia.

1870-88 - Ruler Antonio Guzman Blanco attracts foreign investment, modernises infrastructure and develops agriculture and education.

1908-35 - Dictator Juan Vicente Gomez governs at time when Venezuela becomes world's largest oil exporter.

1945 - Coup established civilian government after decades of military rule.

1948 - President Romulo Gallegos, Venezuela's first democratically-elected leader, overthrown within eight months in military coup led by Marcos Perez Jimenez.

1998 - Hugo Chavez elected president. Leads the Bolivarian Revolution bringing in new socialist and populist economic and social policies funded by the high oil prices. Rewrote the constitution and became increasingly anti-US.

2001 - Chavez utilizes the enabling act to pass socialist laws to redistribute land and wealth. Business and labour groups begin to worry about the government's role in the economy. December 2006 Chavez wins a third presidential term with 63% of the vote.

January 2010 - Bolivar devalued by 17% for priority imports and by 50% for non-essential items to boost oil revenue.

April 2012 - Chavez regime tightens price controls on essential goods against inflation, threatening to expel non-complying companies.

April 2013 - President Hugo Chavez dies at age 58 in March after a battle with cancer. Nicolas Maduro, his chosen successor, is elected president by a narrow margin. The opposition contests the result.

¹⁰⁰ "Venezuela Profile - Timeline". 2018. *BBC News*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-19652436>.

November 2013 - National Assembly grants Maduro emergency powers for a year due to rampant inflation (running at over 50%), which he uses to limit profit margins. Prompts protests by opposition supporters.

2 February-March 2014 - Protests spread to Caracas from the western regions of Tachira and Merida, earning the backing of opposition parties and turning into anti-government rallies. The government accuses the opposition of planning a coup and breaks up the rallies, leaving at least 28 dead.

November 2014 - Government announces cuts in public spending as oil prices reach a four-year low.

2014-2015 - Opposition figures Maria Corina Machado and Antonia Ledesma charged with treason and conspiracy in December 2014 and February 2015 respectively.

December 2015 - Opposition wins a two-thirds majority in parliamentary elections, marking the end of 16 years of Socialist rule.

September 2016 - Hundreds of thousands participate in a rally against Maduro and his actions addressing the economic crisis.

2017 April-June - Several people die in clashes with security forces during mass protests demanding early presidential elections and the revoking of a planned constituent assembly to replace the National Assembly.

July 2017 - Opposition holds an unofficial referendum, reporting that seven million people rejected Maduro's plan to convene a new constituent assembly.

July 2017 - Constituent assembly formed and granted virtually unlimited powers by vote to rewrite the constitution with Maduro's Socialist Party.

3 August 2017 - Luisa Ortega, Venezuela's main prosecutor, fled to Colombia over fear of the government

2018 May - President Maduro wins another term in an election.

2018 August - Venezuela slashes five zeros from its old currency, renaming it the Sovereign Bolivar and tying it to a state-backed cryptocurrency in a bid to tackle rampant hyperinflation.

HUGO CHAVEZ

After a long history of imperialist rule and subsequent independence, the State assumed full sovereignty in 1830¹⁰¹. Throughout the 19th century, *caudillismo* ruled Venezuela in an era of autocracy. *Caudillos* are 'strongmen' in Latin American military and politics. A successful coup in 1945 brought the provisional presidency of Romulo Betancourt. After developing a

¹⁰¹ "Venezuela." Archived 4 September 2011 at the Wayback Machine. Friends of the Pre-Columbian Art Museum. (retrieved 9 July 2011)

new constitution, holding democratic elections that he won, going to exile in a decade of military rule, and returning to power, Betancourt left a stable and democratic Venezuela.

After being pardoned for anti-government activities in 1994, Hugo Chavez contested the elections in 1998 and won with 56.2% of the votes under the promise of a peaceful and democratic social revolution¹⁰². His socialist party, called the “Fifth Republic Movement,” advocated for major changes to the government and economy. Chavez rewrote the constitution, renamed Venezuela the “Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela”, placed many members of his party in the National Assembly¹⁰³. Chavez’s rise to power is known as the Bolivarian Revolution. Although his first term maintained a moderate foreign policy, including considering the United States as an important ally and making state visits as such, his administration was known for its social programmes dedicated to improving access to health, education, food, land, and social security for the poorest members of society.

At this point, Chavez’s role split Venezuelan politics in two. Chavistas saw him a leader who redistributed wealth and worked for the welfare of the people, and Anti-Chavistas saw him as a symbol of autocratic and authoritarian rule who used social welfare to take power away from the people. A counter-revolution even briefly ousted him from office, but it did not take him more than two days to reclaim his seat¹⁰⁴.

In following years, there was a considerable focus on Chavez’s actions and intents. President Chavez took special interest in Venezuela’s oil wealth and re-nationalised the oil industry and severed the ties private businesses owned by the rich and elite had to the oil resources. Chavistas point to reforms like this as Chavez’s success. Throughout Chavez’s presidency, GDP per Capita almost doubled, unemployment halved, and oil export revenues increased from USD\$14 billion to USD\$60 billion annually¹⁰⁵. However, in the Anti-Chavista books, Chavez was simply lucky to preside over an era of rise in oil prices and he ended up spending all the money that came in, which lay the foundation an inevitable economic crash without any type of buffer.

As Chavez continued winning elections amidst loyal support and dissent, he continued to pump money from rising global oil prices into his welfare programs¹⁰⁶. After his 2006 re-election, he expanded his socialist dream beyond borders where he extended and handed it to socialist states like Cuba. The 2004 agreement signed with Cuba slowly transformed into the *Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América (ALBA)* pact, forming a leftist group of Latin American countries to work against United States of America (U.S.A) capitalist exploitation of Latin American countries¹⁰⁷. The group aimed to combat cheap imports and protect worker rights by promoting state-owned enterprises, pursuing free healthcare and education for all citizens, and promoting the effectiveness of socialist policies by controlling

¹⁰² Canache, Damarys. "From Bullets to Ballots: The Emergence of Popular Support for Hugo Chávez." *Latin American Politics and Society* 44, no. 1 (2002): 69-90. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3177111>.

¹⁰³ Lapper, Richard. "Venezuela and the Rise of Chavez: A Background Discussion Paper." November 22, 2005. Accessed September 21, 2018. <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/venezuela-and-rise-chavez-background-discussion-paper>.

¹⁰⁴ Lapper, Richard. "Venezuela and the Rise of Chavez: A Background Discussion Paper." November 22, 2005. Accessed September 21, 2018. <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/venezuela-and-rise-chavez-background-discussion-paper>.

¹⁰⁵ Bibliography "The Achievements of Hugo Chavez." www.counterpunch.org. Last modified December 31, 2015. <https://www.counterpunch.org/2012/12/14/the-achievements-of-hugo-chavez/>.

¹⁰⁶ "The Venezuelan Economy in the Chávez Years." Venezuelanalysis.com. Last modified November 14, 2012. <https://venezuelanalysis.com/indicators/2007>.

¹⁰⁷ "A Guide to ALBA." *Americas Quarterly*. Accessed September 22, 2018. <https://www.americasquarterly.org/hirst/article>.

the narrative through state media. Chavez also made other regional alliances like the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), and the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR).

Despite all that, Venezuela's increasing dependence on high oil prices will prove to be a challenge they would face in time. In addition, not only did Chavez's policies fail to benefit the wealthier Venezuelans, but it made their situations worse as criminality and inflation continued to rise. Its dependence on oil prices, which were soon to fall dramatically, was dangerous for the economy and for the social programs it funded. Although Chavez was committed to leading the nation, his health got in the way, and after a brief battle with cancer, he died in March 2013.

MADURO

Nicolas Maduro organised labour from a young age. Instead of studying at university, he observed organising in Cuba. A loyal Chavista who Chavez thought was fully in line with the Bolivarian Revolution, Maduro even took nominal control of the government when Chavez was undergoing treatment for his health in 2013. After the death of Hugo Chavez, he was soon sworn into office after a marginal electoral victory. Maduro strengthened national security and took precautions against organised crime and drug proliferation and internal corruption¹⁰⁸. He requested more executive power under "rule by decree", a form of control primarily used by dictators, that would allow him to create unchallenged laws.

As Maduro began what he called an "economic war," as the economy keeps crashing, global oil prices dropped and economic chaos ensued in oil-dependant Venezuela, thus beginning its economic crisis. In addition, Maduro formed a Constituent Assembly to draft a new constitution despite domestic and international opposition to it. As he continues to rule Venezuela, we see the country crippling under economic and political struggles, which has resulted in the situation today.

THE CURRENT SITUATION

The problems that construct the Venezuelan crisis today can be split into three categories: economic, political, and humanitarian.

ECONOMIC CRISIS

The drop in oil prices and the subsequent depletion of government reserves forced Maduro to simply print more money to pay workers. The hyperinflation in Venezuela is a result of that monetary incontinence. The inflation currently rising at a staggering 3% every day. The International Monetary Fund predicts the inflation will skyrocket to 1 million percent by the end of the year as the government continues to print money. The IMF reports¹⁰⁹ compares the situation to Germany in 1923 or Zimbabwe under Robert Mugabe in late 2000s. Oil

¹⁰⁸ "Nicolas Maduro Remporte L'élection Présidentielle De Justesse." France 24. Last modified April 15, 2013. <https://www.france24.com/fr/20130415-nicolas-maduro-president-venezuela-election-presidentielle>.

¹⁰⁹ "Outlook for the Americas: A Tougher Recovery." IMF Blog. Last modified July 23, 2018. <https://blogs.imf.org/2018/07/23/outlook-for-the-americas-a-tougher-recovery/>.

prices have picked up recently. Yet underinvestment dating back years¹¹⁰ has crippled *Petróleos de Venezuela, S.A*, the state oil company and it struggles to raise production levels. Production is down 35% since 2015, crashing to less than 1.69 million barrels per day¹¹¹. This is less than half the production since Chavez took over in 1999.

Nicolas Maduro introduced the *petro*, a cryptocurrency that will be backed by oil, and it will be an official currency in August 2018. In August, he also raised the minimum wage by 3000%, shed five zeros off the bolívar, devalued it by more than 90%, and announced that the bolívar will now be backed by the *petro*¹¹². The Venezuelan economy shrank 30% between 2013 and 2017 and the IMF predicts it to shrink another 18% in 2018. Generally, such a situation would force a nation to turn to the IMF for a bailout, but Venezuela severed ties with the multilateral lender in 2007¹¹³. Although the economy is not the only problem, it is evident how the dire situation leads to other issues.

HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

Alejandro Werner of the IMF writes, "The collapse in economic activity, hyperinflation, and increasing deterioration in the provision of public goods as well as shortages of food at subsidized prices have resulted in large migration flows, which will lead to intensifying spill over effects on neighbouring countries," as Venezuela's economic state led to a full blown humanitarian crisis on different fronts. With no motivation for production within the country, since the inflation and price controls allows for no profit, there are massive shortages of even the most basic necessities like food and medicine. The fixed exchange rate and the United State of America's embargo also means it is not possible to import supplies¹¹⁴. Furthermore, it is also not possible for Venezuela to borrow money as the international community have slapped heavy sanctions to condemn the Maduro government.

Lack of food and medicine accelerated the decline in health. Current estimates show that over 11% of children under age five are severely malnourished. Almost one-third of Venezuelans admit to eating two or fewer meals per day, over 85% say they eat less than before, and 44% say they've gone at least one full day without eating¹¹⁵. Illness rising from these problems go untreated as doctors and hospitals face an acute shortage in medicine and related supplies. Moreover, diseases like Diphtheria, that one thought had been eradicated, has returned due to the lack of immunity and adequate vaccination. Malaria has also infected people at a rate that hit a 75-year high. The prevalence of malaria has risen for

¹¹⁰ "Venezuela: How the Most Oil Rich Nation on Earth Was Brought to the Brink of Collapse." *The Independent*. Last modified August 20, 2018. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/analysis-and-features/venezuela-nicolas-maduro-economy-crisis-oil-prices-explained-history-hugo-chavez-a8494696.html>.

¹¹¹ "Is Venezuelan Oil Production Falling Even Faster Than Expected?" *OilPrice.com*. Last modified August 12, 2018. <https://oilprice.com/Geopolitics/International/Is-Venezuelan-Oil-Production-Falling-Even-Faster-Than-Expected.html>.

¹¹² "Here's What Maduro Has Said of Venezuela's Petro Cryptocurrency." *Bloomberg.com*. Accessed September 22, 2018. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-08-20/here-s-what-maduro-has-said-of-venezuela-s-petro-cryptocurrency>.

¹¹³ Tran, Mark. "Venezuela Quits IMF and World Bank." *The Guardian*. Last modified May 25, 2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2007/may/01/venezuela.imf>.

¹¹⁴ Herrera, Isayen. "As Venezuela Collapses, Children Are Dying of Hunger." *The New York Times - Breaking News, World News & Multimedia*. Last modified December 17, 2017. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/12/17/world/americas/venezuela-children-starving.html>.

¹¹⁵ "UNICEF Sees Growing Signs of Malnutrition Crisis in Venezuela." *U.S.* Last modified January 26, 2018. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-venezuela-unicef/unicef-sees-growing-signs-of-malnutrition-crisis-in-venezuela-idUSKBN1FF10F>.

similar reasons and has infected enough people to hit a 75-year high¹¹⁶. In just one week in October 2017, 32 people died from the disease as waiting rooms overflowed and doctors attempted to treat the illness without medicine¹¹⁷. Doctors are reported to have left the country as they say they cannot treat patients anymore, which has contributed to an increasing brain drain¹¹⁸.

The average citizen too flees the country as a migration crisis looms large. The UN estimates that 2.3 million Venezuelans have fled since 2015 and Colombian authorities predict another 2 million could follow by 2020. The majority have crossed the border into Colombia and spread on to Ecuador, Peru, Chile, and even Brazil. Plenty of people have also fled to Spain and the United States of America to seek asylum. So far in 2018, half a million have arrived in Ecuador and just in the first half of August 2018, the migration seems to have accelerated with 43,000 Venezuelans arriving in the Ecuadorian city of Tulcán¹¹⁹. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees fears the number could 100,000 by the end of August 2018.

The mass migration, with numbers beyond imagination, has also created problems for the host countries as they struggle to take in thousands of refugees. Latin American countries have recently introduced measures strengthening their borders to halt refugee influx. Demanding passports at borders is one of the new measures, which has proved successful as many Venezuelans lack passports due to the situation at home. Unrest in refugee camps has also increased across the continent with a Brazilian camp recently being lit on fire by the locals after the Venezuelans allegedly robbed a restaurant¹²⁰. Massive protests have also broken out in Ecuador to protest the influx of refugees as local population fear a loss of jobs. The Venezuelan exodus shows no sign of slowing down and many, who have fled, fear a peaceful solution is not possible anymore due to the increasing political crisis.

POLITICAL CRISIS

Perhaps President Maduro also thinks a peaceful solution is not possible as he continues to drown out of the slightest of dissent with strict authoritarian measures. By establishing a Constituent Assembly to draft a new Constitution and absolving the opposition controlled National Assembly, Maduro continues to claim more power for himself and is well on the path to dictatorship. The regime and the military react violently to protests by the public, charge opposition leaders with treason, and suppress the freedom of press¹²¹.

¹¹⁶ Beaumont, Peter. "Malaria Rates Soar in Venezuela ? a Nation That Had Nearly Wiped It out." The Guardian. Last modified May 21, 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2018/may/21/malaria-rates-soar-venezuela-five-times-more-cases-than-in-2013>.

¹¹⁷ "Venezuela's Health Care System Ready To Collapse Amid Economic Crisis." NPR.org. Last modified February 1, 2018. <https://www.npr.org/2018/02/01/582469305/venezuelas-health-care-system-ready-to-collapse-amid-economic-crisis?t=1537577676815>.

¹¹⁸ "The 'Brain Drain' and Beyond." Venezuelanalysis.com. Last modified August 30, 2018. <https://venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/13774>.

¹¹⁹ Phillips, Tom. "Fleeing Venezuelans Face Suspicion and Hostility As Migration Crisis Worsens." The Guardian. Last modified August 19, 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/aug/19/fleeing-venezuelans-suspicion-hostility-migration-crisis-ecuador>.

¹²⁰ "Brazilian Border Town Residents Drive out Venezuelan Immigrants." U.S. Last modified August 19, 2018. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-venezuela-brazil-border/brazilian-border-town-residents-drive-out-venezuelan-immigrants-idUSKBN1L30NV>.

¹²¹ "Censorship and Persecution: Net Closes on Venezuelan Media | Reporters Without Borders." RSF. Last modified May 16, 2017. <https://rsf.org/en/news/censorship-and-persecution-net-closes-venezuelan-media>.

The Venezuelan streets are often filled with protestors and even the most peaceful of demonstrations end in tear gas and casualties. In mid 2017, there were more than 120 deaths as policemen shot at the marchers mercilessly. This repression of dissent has manifested itself in the form of extreme consequences for the public and the opposition members as torture and extreme forms of punishments and retribution have become more common. In July 2017, protests and public gatherings were banned with a maximum sentence of 5 years. Maduro continues to take new measures, in 2017 he had several opposition members arrested and charged, indicating he is willing to do anything to protect his political power. Venezuelan politics has become increasingly unstable, with its economic and refugee crisis, and it is time to address this issue that threatens both the sanctity of democracy and the wellbeing of millions of Venezuelans.

BLOC POSITIONS

LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES

As neighbouring countries continue to take on refugees from Venezuela, and not directly confronting Maduro, they have taken to the Organisation of the American States (OAS) (including the USA) to condemn Maduro for what they consider to be undemocratic elections in May 2018. A panel enlisted by the OAS also accused the Maduro government of crimes against humanity¹²². The Lima Group of Latin American countries (including Canada) announced that it does not recognise the legitimacy of the May 2018 elections. They indicated that they would call their ambassadors back from Caracas for consultations and coordinate a regional response to the exodus of Venezuelans “who have been obligated to abandon their country”¹²³.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Although Hugo Chavez began his rule with the USA as a friendly ally; relations quickly deteriorated as the US failed to alert him about a brewing revolution. Chavez’s anti-USA rhetoric, friendship with Iran and Cuba, and sanctions from the USA led to sour relations between the two nations. Venezuela and the United States maintain the contentious relationship under President Maduro as both States continued to frequently expel diplomats. In 2014, the United States House of Representatives passed the Venezuelan Human Rights and Democracy Protection Act (H.R. 4587; 113th Congress). This was a bill that would apply economic sanctions against Venezuelan officials who were involved in the mistreatment of protests during the 2014 Venezuelan protests. In 2015, President Barack Obama issued a presidential order declaring Venezuela a “threat to national security” and ordered sanctions against seven Venezuelan officials. President Donald Trump in August 2017 said he is “not going to rule out a military option” to confront the Maduro regime¹²⁴.

¹²² “Lima Group Says Does Not Recognize Venezuela's Election.” U.S. Last modified May 21, 2018.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-venezuela-election-limagroup/lima-group-says-does-not-recognize-venezuelas-election-idUSKCN1I1M19G>.

¹²³ “OAS Resolution Against Venezuela is Important ? but Not for the Reason You Think.” Miamiherald. Last modified June 6, 2018. <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/news-columns-blogs/andres-oppenheimer/article212686404.html>.

¹²⁴ “United States–Venezuela Relations.” Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia. Last modified August 25, 2018.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States%E2%80%93Venezuela_relations#Presidency_of_Nicol%C3%A1s_Maduro.

EUROPEAN UNION

The EU condemns President Maduro's repression of opposition members and believes the recent elections were neither free nor fair, which led to sanctions against multiple Venezuelan officials by issuing travel bans and freezing their assets¹²⁵. The bloc targeted names including former Vice President Tareck El Aissami because he is "responsible for serious human rights violations ... including arbitrary detention, politically motivated investigations, inhumane and degrading treatment, and torture," and current Vice President Delcy Rodriguez¹²⁶. The EU continues to keep an eye on the economic and humanitarian situation and has committed to supporting Venezuela to find peaceful and democratic solutions.

KEY QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED

- What are the sources of current economic crisis and what can be done in short and long term to restore stability?
- What are the needs of the refugees and host nations in this crisis?
- What are the actions the international community and the United Nations can take?
- How can a stable political future be secured?

¹²⁵ "Declaration by the High Representative on Behalf of the EU on the Situation in Venezuela - Consilium." Home - Consilium. Last modified April 19, 2018. <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2018/04/19/declaration-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-eu-on-the-situation-in-venezuela/>.

¹²⁶ "Declaration by the High Representative on Behalf of the EU on the Situation in Venezuela - Consilium." Home - Consilium. Last modified April 19, 2018. <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2018/04/19/declaration-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-eu-on-the-situation-in-venezuela/>.