TIMUN

Study Guide - Week 16

UNSC- US intervention in Venezuela

1) TDLR:

Recently the tensions between Washington and its neighbors have been rising rapidly. The United States made comments threatening the independence of a number of countries and in August 2025 started building up their military presence around Venezuela. On 3rd of January 2026 the US executed the operation Southern Spear which consisted of a number of targeted attacks in Venezuelan airports and military bases as well as a strike in Caracas resulting in the capture of the President Nicolas Maduro and his wife. Since then President Trump has claimed that the US will be 'running Venezuela' and has exerted significant pressure on the government of the country to follow the US imposed policies, mainly when it comes to oil extraction and trade.
What does such an attack mean for the international legal order built on the rules of equality and sovereignty of states? The Security Council meets to discuss and decide on an appropriate response to United States' actions and secure a fair and stable situation in Venezuela.

2) Background Information:

Since the 1948 coup d'état America has had a long standing relation of economic cooperation with Venezuela. The vast oil reserves in the country have been a desirable resource for consecutive US administrations and American companies have been participating in the extraction, refining and trade of oil for many years. Over the decades this relation has been strained more than once on account of the heavily unstable situation in Venezuela, where the changing regimes had varying approaches to America. The US has been repeatedly accused of organising coups, supporting violent oppositionists or preparing assasination attempts on the leaders of Venezuela though no concrete evidence to any of such claims was ever presented.

Since 2014 American congress has repeatedly authorized varying packages of sanctions on Venezuela over the violations of human rights, violations of the rule of law, lack of democratic process and hostile actions against the US. This has significantly strained the relations between two states, though it was only a beginning of the acts that were to come with the first Trump presidency. In 2017, following the Venezuelan Constitutional Crisis, President Trump for the first time stated that he could not "rule out a military option" as a response to the autocratic regime and growing crisis under President Maduro.

Under the Biden administration the US-Venezuela relations have been slowly warming up with the US attempts at mediation between the opposition groups and the government of Maduro which culminated with the pause on US sanctions and 2023 election agreement that was supposed to allow for free democratic elections in Venezuela in 2024.

With Trump's return to office in 2025 the US attempts at peaceful resolution of the Venezuela situation ceased. Mass deportations reported in the first year of the 47th Presidency included hundreds of Venezuelan citizens who were accused of drug trafficking but did not have anything proven to them. Despite judicial efforts at halting the deportations, the majority of the detained were transported to El Salvador. Further in July 2025 the US Department of the Treasury designated the Cartel of the Suns as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist and cited President Maduro as its head.

Since September of the same year US has also started to commit airstrikes on Venezuelan ships who have been deemed by the US administration as compliant in the drug trafficking operations, though no substantial evidence in the matter was shown. In total 37 vessels have been shot and at least 117 people killed in the operations. The American administration has followed by increasing sanctions on Venezuela and Venezuelan companies as well as imposing higher visa restrictions on high ranking officials of the Maduro government.

Finally, on January 3rd 2026, as part of the operation Southern Spear the US military conducted a series of strikes inside Venezuela including the capture of President Nicolas Maduro and his wife under the allegations that he had been leading the Cartel of the Suns. Following the attack Delcy Rodriguez was sworn as acting President and the government remained in place. To prevent a second wave of attacks the acting President has announced a 50 million-barrel oil supply deal with the US and signed a bill supposed to release all political prisoners, number of which has been estimated at around 800.

Since the United States have lifted the sanctions on oil trade and reopened their diplomatic envoys to Venezuela.

3) Key Issues:

3.1) Sovereignty vs. External Intervention: The main question posed in front of the UNSC is: Was the US intervention in Venezuela justified? Where are the borders of 'self-defence' action when in the process you violate the sovereignty of another state and disregard the diplomatic immunity of its officials? The Security Council will have to consider whether US' actions were lawful and whether the operation Southern Spear constituted a breach of national and territorial sovereignty.

3.2) Regional Stability and Security: The sky-rocketing tensions in the regions are impossible to overlook. The US-Venezuela conflict has resulted in a wave of uncontrolled migration, security concerns and economical imbalance in Latin America. The Security Council will have to consider whether the situation should be discussed in a broader context, encompassing the entire region. How should inter-American migration be tackled? How can we prevent the economical instabilities resulting from the US intervention?

3.3) Humanitarian And Economic Crisis: Around seven million have left Venezuela, driven out by tough times and unrest. The US sanctions have caused the humanitarian situation in Venezuela to successively deteriorate over the years. Lack of access to healthcare and medicine, stagnating economy and consistently rising inflation has contributed to a great suffering of millions of Venezuelan families. What can be done to better the situation of the Venezuelan people? How can we avoid such crises in the future?

3.4) Sanctions Shape Energy Moves: Still feeling the weight of international penalties, Venezuela's economic struggles deepen alongside shrinking oil production, nudging shifts in worldwide energy flows. Sanctions have ravaged the Venezuelan economy and now the US has forced the government to turn over the oil production into the hands of private businesses. Are sanctions still an effective way of dealing with foreign adversaries? Do sanctions cause more suffering to civilians than the governments of targeted nations? Should the mechanism of sanctions still be used in the current day and age?

4) What can the UNSC actually do?

Peace across nations falls on the shoulders of the United Nations Security Council. Its job? Keeping global order steady. Under given powers, actions may be taken by this body. Decisions unfold when threats emerge. Authority allows for responses to conflict. Measures get applied if needed. Stability often depends on its choices. Moments of crisis shape its role. International safety links directly to its work. Rules guide what it does. Responses come through collective judgment. Weighty tasks belong here. Serious situations meet its attention. Watchful eyes follow each move.

Consider what happens when armed forces act, laws might bend. Think through who gains, who loses once shots are fired. Question whether rules still hold after borders shift overnight. Look close at power moves disguised as protection. Wonder how courts respond when governments push limits abroad.

Issue statements that call out or support what countries have done. Some begin with quiet words, others snap sharply. Reactions twist through praise or blame depending on who watches. Tone shifts, but purpose stays fixed. Words land one after another, never rushing. Each line holds weight without shouting it. A calm presence can settle unrest. Watchful eyes often prevent escalation. Silence sometimes speaks louder than orders. Standing by might mean more than stepping in.

Give approval for penalties or suggest changes to them.
Facilitate negotiations or mediation between parties.
Still, what can actually work often stalls when key nations block moves or pull in different directions.

The Security Council is the UN body tasked with upkeep international peace and security. Its role as an arbiter and ultimate judge in conflicts threatening international peace and stability has been clearly laid out in the UN Charter. It is also the only UN body whose decisions are legally binding upon all Member States (Art. 25 and 48. UN Charter) and have to be followed under threat of penalties from the Council including the use of force. In practice, the Security Council can do the following:

- Approve and mandate collective action (including military or technical missions) under Chapter VII
- Impose binding sanctions, resource obligations, or coordination mechanisms
- Deploy peacekeeping missions to crisis areas to helps stabilize situations (in this scenario it can deploy peacekeepers to aid evacuation efforts)
- Resolve disputes between nations and propose binding compromises
- etc.

5) Major Stakeholder's:

5.1) United States of America: The US main goal is to secure its national interests. Cutting down illegal migration into the US, advancing its campaign against drug trafficking and securing access to oil reserves necessary for maintaining the stability and growth of the American economy. In the debate they would defend their actions as legal and necessary under the doctrine of self defence since the drug trafficking and illegal migration were considered to threaten their national security.

5.2) Venezuela Government and Transition Leaders: The government of Venezuela would likely try to remain as a neutral party in the debate, fearing the potential repercussions of speaking against the US. They advocate for national sovereignty and the right of Venezuela to be governed without outside influences, however their vulnerability to US attacks and current economical dependency on US lifting sanctions and US companies operating in Venezuela would force them to take a moderated stance in the discussion.

5.3) Russia and China: Both Russia and China upheld good relations with the Maduro regime, they speak out against the US intervention in Venezuela and support the independence of the south american country. In the debate they would condemn the US advocate to recognize their actions as violation of the primary principles of the UN Charter.

5.4) Brazil and Colombia: Two significant neighbours of Venezuela have an ambiguous stance on the situation. They enjoyed good relations with President Maduro and avoided calling him a dictator or acting out against the regime. They support the independence and sovereignty of Venezuela and oppose American imperialism while at the same time ignoring the human rights violations and political oppression happening under the Maduro regime.

5.5) European Union States: The European states opposed the regime of Maduro and condemned him for a number of human rights violations and an autocratic form of government. At the same time they are wary of condoning the American intervention due to significant pressure and alarming comments made in regards to Greenland. Therefore the most European Union states would likely advocate for Venezuelan sovereignty and territorial integrity while ignoring the fact of the military intervention to capture Maduro as not to stand openly against the US.

6) Sources and further reading:

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Analysis of International Power Dynamics
https://academic.oup.com/isagsq/article/6/1/ksaf126/8444318

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