Restructuring Venezuela's Political Structure

For the last couple weeks, Venezuela has been the center to a series of conflicts and problems involving global powers. After years of corruption, fraudulent elections, dictation rulership, censorship, and also involvement with narcoterrorism, Nicolas Maduro, the last president, was captured and transported to the United States. Maduro is being accused by the United States of violating human rights, fraudulent, drug trafficking, authoritarianism and also miseconomic management, which even led to the mass migration of many Venezuelans due to the huge economic decline along with poverty and terrorism in the country. Upon this situation, the U.S military architected a capture plan to take Maduro off power, since even elections weren't enough, more than 200 U.S special forces troops with the support of over 150 aircrafts gathered to raid Maduro in Caracas. After facing Cuban and Venezuelan military force resistance, the mission was successful and Maduro came back with the troops to face trial in America. Venezuela got left into the hands of the American government, which has been ccontrolling and helping to restructure the country.

While Venezuela's future political situation remains uncertain and unpredictable. However, Donald Trump, President of the United States vowed to "run the country" until there's a proper and honest power transition. Currently, Venezuela's Vice-President Delcy Rodríguez, who was part of Maduro's inner circle, is the interim president after being sworn in by the nation's Supreme Court. However the United States government advised, "if they don't make the right decisions, the United States will retain multiple levers of leverage to ensure that our interests are protected". María Corina Machado, part of the opposition, stated that the best decision would be to let her coalition be in power, claiming that none of the people and citizens of Venezuela trusted Rodríguez, telling CBS that the interim leader was "one of the main architects... of repression for innocent people" in the South American country. In response Trump said that she 'had neither the support nor the respect within Venezuela to become its

leader.", leaving them with no option but to just give the Vice-President a chance. Moving to a more popular point of view, the people of Venezuela are profoundly grateful and actually thank president Trump for taking on such an action that contributed to Maduro's deposition. Due to this past corrupt dictature, many residents from Venezuela immigrated to neighboring countries to avoid or go away from this suppression of rights, violence and corruption. Since 2014, 7.7 million Venezuelans or 20% of the population, have left the country, unable to afford food or seeking better opportunities abroad, according to the U.N. International Organization for Migration. Neighboring Colombia has received the largest share of the diaspora, with 2.8 million Venezuelans, followed by 1.7 million in Peru, according to the R4V platform, a group of regional NGOs assisting migrants and refugees from Venezuela set up by the U.N. migration agency. However now that Maduro is not in control anymore, Venezuela's diaspora is free to comeback and are expected to comeback to their country soon, "For those of us living in exile, it is an immense joy," said Cynthia Diaz at a small march convened in Ecuador's capital, Quito. "Venezuelans, sooner rather than later, will return to Venezuela - to a free Venezuela, to a Venezuela that is a land of greatness," Diaz said.

With Donald Trump and the united states "running the country", he states that is here to help and make sure Venezuela transition to a honest and juridicitous political situation, looking to end and change the regime and corruption established by Maduro in his last term, the Freedom House, an U.S. organization that advocates for human rights, states that they need to guide Venezuela and take the proper measures to guarantee the end of censorship and restore the population's basic rights, "A successful transition will depend on the reestablishment of the rule of law, respect for constitutional order, and the restoration of strong, independent public institutions. New interim Maria Corina was left with demands and requests to attend from the government, as a gesture of appreciation and also, to ensure that this next government is going to rely on honesty and transparency only, recovering Venezuela's economical potential and global trust. an estimation of 303 billion barrels that are not being well used since oil production has declined since the early 2000's. The Trump administration sees significant potential for its own energy prospects in

Venezuela's reserves; they are hoping to recover the industry by making sure their markets are reliable and stable once again. The U.S is looking forward to establishing oil firms to guarantee their profit and a piece of this large reserve in Venezuela oil production, as well as big investments from other countries to help Venezuela recover and reach their full potential in the oil industry. Those are all plans and measures for the future, yet Trump government still wants a kind of “compensation” for taking Maduro away from presidency with the whole military operation, they’re demanding Venezuela to turn in up to 50 million barrels of oil to the US that would be sold at the current market price, raising money to help Venezuela's recovery as well as the U.S economy. While justifying the seizure of Maduro from Caracas, Trump also claimed that Venezuela "unilaterally seized and stole American oil". Venezuela nationalised its oil industry in 1976, and in 2007, President Hugo Chavez exerted more state control over the remaining foreign-owned assets of US oil firms operating in the country. In 2019, a World Bank tribunal ordered Venezuela to pay $8.7bn in compensation to ConocoPhillips for the move. That sum has not been paid by Venezuela, so at least one US oil company has outstanding compensation which is owed to it.

Aside the compensation for all the help, another measure demanded to be implemented by Donald Trump was that Venezuela would prioritize only the U.S among his oil industry, ABC News has reported, citing unnamed sources, that Trump had told Venezuela's interim leader Delcy Rodríguez to agree to an exclusive partnership with the US on oil production and sever economic ties with China, Russia, Iran and Cuba. Such action left countries leaders furious and disrespected, claiming that this measure was unlawful, against natural rights and a restrictions to Venezuela's freedom, Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said on Wednesday that the US's "blatant military action against Venezuela, and its demand that Venezuela prioritise the US in disposing of its oil resources, is a typical act of bullying, a serious violation of international law, a severe infringement upon Venezuela's sovereignty, and a grave damage to the rights of the Venezuelan people".

In conclusion, the restructuring of Venezuela's political and economical situation is uncertain and unpredictable. However, the United States together with the new established government composed by

Maria Delce Rodriguez and her affiliates are setting a path to the full restoration of the country, helping it recover its financial and diplomatic potential by administering oil extraction, ensuring a jurisdicious, honest, and fair government. Following the capture of Maduro, and also all the help being provided to recover venezuela, the united states wanted a kind of compensation for its hard work, they demanded 50 million barrels of oil and also exclusive access to Venezuela's oil industry, keeping countries like China, Russia, Iran and Cuba away from the market. President Donald Trump seeks to bring back peace and global trust to the country and states that he will “run the country” until then.

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Introduction

The capture of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro by United States forces in January 2026 marked a significant moment in contemporary international politics and quickly drew comparisons to the 1989 capture of Panamanian leader Manuel Noriega. In both cases, the United States justified military intervention by citing allegations of drug trafficking, corruption, and systemic human rights violations. These actions generated widespread debate regarding state sovereignty, international law, and the limits of foreign intervention. Beyond these legal and ethical concerns, the removal of authoritarian leadership raises broader questions about political recovery and long-term stability. Panama's transition following Noriega's capture provides a historical precedent for democratic rebuilding and economic stabilization after dictatorship. Examining the similarities between the captures of Maduro and Noriega, along with Panama's post-authoritarian recovery, offers insight into how international actors may contribute to restructuring Venezuela's political system in a manner that prioritizes the welfare of its population.

Similarities Between the Captures of Maduro and Noriega

One of the strongest similarities between the captures of Nicolás Maduro and Manuel Noriega is the nature of the criminal allegations brought against them. Noriega was indicted in the United States in the late 1980s for collaborating with drug cartels and facilitating cocaine trafficking through Panama. Similarly, "Maduro was charged with narco-terrorism, drug trafficking, and conspiracy to flood the United States with illegal narcotics while using Venezuelan state institutions to protect criminal organizations" (CBS News). In both cases, U.S. prosecutors portrayed these leaders not simply as corrupt politicians but as central figures in transnational criminal networks. Another key similarity is the justification used by the United States for intervention. American officials argued that diplomatic efforts, sanctions, and international pressure had failed to hold either leader accountable. As a result, the U.S. framed military action as a necessary step to restore stability and uphold the rule of law. In 1989, Operation Just Cause led to Noriega's capture after he sought refuge in the Vatican embassy. "Similarly,In 2026, a rapid and targeted U.S. military operation resulted in Maduro's arrest and immediate transfer to the United States for trial" (CNN). These cases demonstrate a pattern in which the U.S. turns to force when other methods are perceived as ineffective and translucent.

Both captures also sparked international controversy. Supporters argued that Noriega and Maduro had forfeited their legitimacy through repression and criminal activity, while critics condemned the actions as violations of sovereignty

and international law. “Legal scholars remain divided on whether such interventions can ever be justified, especially when they involve the removal of a sitting head of state” (Council on Foreign Relations).

Differences in Context and Global Response

Despite these similarities, the political contexts surrounding the two captures differ significantly. Noriega’s removal occurred during the late Cold War, when U.S. influence in Latin America was largely uncontested and minuscule . Many regional governments, though critical, lacked the power to challenge U.S. actions directly. “In contrast, Maduro’s capture took place in a multipolar world in which countries such as Russia, China, and Iran openly opposed U.S. intervention in Venezuela” (New York Times). This shift has intensified international disagreement and complicated efforts to coordinate Venezuela’s transition to a unified country.

The scale of military involvement also differed. Operation Just Cause involved over 25,000 U.S. troops and caused widespread destruction in Panama City, including civilian casualties. “The operation against Maduro was far more limited and designed as a rapid extraction rather than a full invasion, reflecting advances in military technology and greater concern for international backlash” (NPR). These differences highlight how U.S. intervention strategies have evolved over time,easing potential backlash from world countries with massive influence.

Panama’s Recovery After Noriega’s Capture

Panama’s recovery following Noriega’s capture provides a useful framework for understanding how a country can rebuild after authoritarian rule. One of the most important steps Panama took was restoring civilian governance. Guillermo Endara, who had won the annulled 1989 election, was sworn in as president and immediately dismantled the military dictatorship. This transition symbolized a return to democratic rule and helped restore public trust.

Institutional reform was central to Panama’s recovery. Electoral systems were strengthened, judicial independence was reinforced, and the military’s role in politics was significantly reduced. International monitoring and support helped ensure that democratic reforms were implemented effectively. These changes allowed Panama to distance itself from authoritarian rule and rebuild legitimacy.

Economic recovery was another critical component. Panama maintained its dollarized economy and invested heavily in infrastructure, particularly the Panama Canal, which strengthened its role in global trade. “Foreign investment increased as political stability improved, raising living standards for many Panamanians”(CBS News). Although

inequality and corruption persisted, economic growth reduced unrest and reinforced democratic stability.

Panama also pursued accountability through legal channels rather than revenge. Noriega's conviction and imprisonment demonstrated a commitment to the rule of law while avoiding widespread retaliation. This balance between justice and reconciliation proved essential in preventing further instability and corruption.

Panama's recovery was further supported by diplomatic normalization. By rebuilding relationships with regional and international partners, Panama reintegrated into global political and economic systems. This acceptance reduced isolation and helped sustain long-term recovery.

Venezuela's Post-Maduro Challenges

Venezuela faces challenges that are far more severe than those Panama encountered in 1989. Years of economic collapse, hyperinflation, and political repression have left the country in a humanitarian crisis. "Millions of Venezuelans have fled the country, while those who remain struggle with food shortages, limited healthcare, and failing infrastructure" (NPR).

Politically, Venezuela lacks a unified transition plan. Power struggles among government officials, opposition groups, and military leaders have created uncertainty about constitutional authority. Unlike Panama, Venezuela's transition is further complicated by strong international divisions, making coordinated support more difficult.

How World Leaders Can Help Restructure Venezuela

World leaders can play a decisive role in helping Venezuela rebuild in ways that benefit its people. One of the most important steps is supporting free and fair elections. International organizations such as the United Nations and the Organization of American States can provide election monitoring, mediation, and technical assistance to restore legitimacy and public trust in democratic institutions.

Economic and humanitarian support is equally critical. Coordinated aid efforts can address immediate humanitarian needs, while long-term economic reforms can stabilize Venezuela's economy. Conditional debt relief and targeted sanctions reform tied to transparency and democratic progress could ease civilian suffering while encouraging accountability.

Transitional justice mechanisms can also promote long-term stability. Truth commissions and selective prosecutions can help address past abuses without fueling cycles of revenge. Panama's experience demonstrates that

accountability paired with reconciliation is essential for sustainable recovery.

Finally, multilateral cooperation is key. Rather than imposing a single political outcome, world leaders should work through international frameworks to support Venezuelan-led solutions. This approach reduces polarization and increases the likelihood of lasting reform.

Conclusion

The captures of Nicolás Maduro and Manuel Noriega reveal recurring patterns in U.S. intervention, international law, and accountability for authoritarian leaders. While the two cases share similarities in motivation and execution, Panama's recovery illustrates the importance of democratic reform, economic stabilization, and international cooperation. Venezuela now stands at a crossroads. With coordinated global support focused on legitimacy, humanitarian relief, and institutional rebuilding, Venezuela has the opportunity to restructure its political system in a way that truly benefits its people.

The social and political impacts of Venezuela's structure

The political system and structure of Venezuela have become a concern to international countries due to the severe social impact it has left in the lives of its citizens. For a period of years, political instability and the consolidation of an authoritarian power has brought poverty and depressed lifestyles among the majority of Venezuelans. However, this has not always been the political situation for Venezuela. For the grand part of its history, the country was one that functioned as a democracy and that protected civil rights, participation in politics, and the rule of law. The shift happened when centralization of power moved towards an authoritarian system after Nicolas Maduro came into power in the year 2013, following the death of Hugo Chavez.

As cited by Deborah L. Norden, Venezuela under Maduro exemplifies how "authoritarian systems can become more deeply entrenched during periods of crisis," making political change more difficult while social conditions continue to decline. Another social consequence of this consolidation has been the inability of citizens to meet basic needs due to economic collapse and repression. According to CBS News, "more than 70% of residents live in poverty," which highlights the effects that decisions of a national government have on the lives of a country's population. This norm in the lives of the Venezuelans has impacted the way daily life works.

By analyzing the Venezuelan crisis from a social-political perspective, it is evident that the crisis is more than a struggle between leaders or an issue of international relations between countries. It is essential for world leaders to recognize the reality of its citizens and the struggles they go through everyday, not only addressing the major problems as political power but giving a voice to the Venezuelan people. This perspective allows future investigations to focus on solutions that prioritize human rights and social justice.

In addition to experiencing economic issues, the political instability in Venezuela has had a significant impact on the social life of Venezuelans. Through the Malala Fund, the experiences of Venezuelans shows how the impact of instability has brought the lack of food and the control of access to food as an alternative to hunger. In an account written by a Venezuelan to the Malala Fund, the experiences of the country demonstrate how Venezuela's situation has experienced hyperinflation for years and that "eight out of ten Venezuelans reported eating less due not having enough food at home or due to scarcity."

The absence of functional infrastructure adds to these difficulties. In the same statement she explains "when the power goes out, the internet goes out," preventing individuals from purchasing products, access services, or even doing their homework. Looking from a social-political perspective, it can be seen that the government fails in more than just economic management, lack of education, communication or social participation, but this failure directly affects the country's peoples opportunities and their future, reinforcing the cycles of poverty among the younger generations.

Data from research-based studies confirm these personal experiences. The findings presented by El Ucabista from the ENCOVI study indicate that while food assistance reaches most families, the reality is such that food parcels reach over half of the families receiving them occasionally and especially in smaller towns. This distribution is indicative of the effect a centralized political system has on the distribution of aid to meet the demands required by the population.

Further, the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect states that for many Venezuelans, the experience of the crisis is more than a political transition and describes it as "years of collective trauma shaped by repression, family separation, persecution, and survival

under extraordinary strain" This reinforces the idea that simply addressing the politics of a state is not a solution unless the social elements are also addressed. It is these reasons that highlight that international intervention in a state is necessary to address social as well as political ills.

Other than food insecurity, and lack of education, the political hardships in Venezuela have led to the widespread of violence. The failure of the Venezuelan government has created a power gap that has been filled by armed groups, gangs, and corrupt members of the government itself. Instead of securing population safety, it can be argued that the Venezuelan government has increasingly used aggressive power, creating a society in which fear has become an element of daily life. Citizens in Venezuela cannot express their views, or trust institutions because of fear.

The concern of drug trafficking and organized crime in Venezuela is tied to this institutional breakdown, where a failure in the justice system and the police in Venezuela has allowed armed groups and drug trafficking to spread being excused from punishment, according to reports from Human Rights Watch. In a social and political context, violence in Venezuelan society cannot be defined only as a criminal act but the failure of political institutions to ensure the rule of law and the safety of the community, adding to the country's vulnerability.

The other important social contradiction in Venezuela is the gasoline shortage. Even though having some of the biggest oil reserves in the world, Venezuelans have been deprived of gasoline. Less gasoline distributed with long periods of waiting, and some areas having less access to gasoline. The lack of fuel has indirectly affected daily lives, including transportation to work, access to health care, and school attendance. The country failed to utilize their resources to benefit the population, highlighting the social inequality that existed and the government's lack of care for the people.

Together the rise of violence, drug practices, and gas shortages are indicative that Venezuela faces social dilemmas which are, in fact, intertwined with political failures. Social dilemmas cause isolation, limit locomotion, and reduce social unity, which results in instability and security risks. As time passes by and these issues resist, a critical question is raised, if global intervention is needed when a country cant provide security for its citizens, by understanding these social consequences a pattern can be noticed, making it easier to examine whether and how global intervention should occur.

Based on various social and political issues on the Venezuelan crisis, it is evident that the country's challenges go beyond internal governance failures and raises questions about the role of the international community. A concern based on how the country addresses issues of providing a secure environment, access to civil rights, and ensuring the rights of the population, internals often face a question whether intervention is necessary or effective. As highlighted by the Global Center for the Responsibility to Protect, enduring repression, failed inductions and trauma suggest conditions in which civilians must become a priority.

By international intervention, it does not simply imply military action or regime change. However, we may also consider the political and social dimensions of the crisis from the perspective of diplomatic pressure, legal accountability, and institutional support. Based on the analysis of the situation from a social perspective provided by Deborah L. Norden, it can be said that authoritarian systems tend to strengthen in periods of instability, indicating that short-term political pressure alone is not enough. So effective international responses should focus on rebuilding institutions, restoring the rule of law, and supporting civil society in a way that will empower the Venezuelan population rather than deeper repression.

However, at a social level, it is essential to focus on relevant intervention strategies, promoting security of citizens, restorations of basic services and equitable access to natural resources. Addressing the violence, insecurity and fuel shortage requires efforts that limit corruption and strengthen effective mechanisms. Without attention to these structural issues, political change risks becoming more symbolic than transformative.

In summary, the case of Venezuela shows that social suffering is inevitably connected with political failure. Understanding the roots of poverty, violence, and inequality provides global interventors with tools to evaluate when and how international interventions are justified. By anchoring these interventions across the world within the context of human rights, rebuilding institutions, and social recovery, the international community may contribute to long-term stability that reflects the needs and dignity of the Venezuelan people.

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