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EU Foreign Policy Toward Venezuela, 2017-2018: A Study on the Potential Development of Human Rights in EU Foreign Policy

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EU Foreign Policy Toward Venezuela, 2017-2018: A Study on the Potential Development of Human Rights in EU Foreign Policy

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Chapter One: Introduction

On January 23, 2019, Juan Guaidó, Speaker of Venezuela's National Assembly (AN), was declared the acting president of Venezuela (Vanessa Herrero, 2019). By this point the AN was the only constitutional body in Venezuela freely elected by popular sovereignty. All other federal bodies supposed to be democratic were created arbitrarily, secured by fraud, or otherwise controlled by the ruling party. After fraudulent elections in May 2018 in which Nicolás Maduro, authoritarian president of Venezuela since 2013, claimed victory, Maduro's inauguration on January 23, 2019 left the country without a constitutional president, because none had actually been elected. So, as stated by Article 233 of the Venezuela Constitution, the AN has the obligation to appoint an interim one until elections can be held (Asamblea Nacional Constituyente, 1999). This was the argument of the opposition (Olmo, 2019). Democratic uprisings through various means are of course not unusual in the world. But something about early 2019 and the Venezuela Crisis is unprecedented—Guaidó was almost immediately recognized by much of the democratic world, including the European Union (EU) and many of its member states (MS).

On January 23, the EU's High Representative for the Union of Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HR/VP), Federica Mogherini, issued a statement which condemned the Maduro regime, called for a political transition, and supported the opposition-controlled AN (Council of the EU, 2019b). Though the statement did not formally recognize Guaidó, for the EU it was uncharacteristically forceful in form and substance. Three days later, various MS—including the UK, Germany, France, and Spain, the most relevant or powerful ones—issued seemingly coordinated ultimatums to Maduro: if he did not call presidential elections within eight days, they would recognize Guaidó as president (Deutsche Welle, 2019). That day, January 26, the Council of the European Union (the Council) followed with another statement. Though rhetorically just a bit more moderate than various MS' statements, it was substantively similar, saying, "[i]n the absence of an announcement on the organisation of fresh elections with the necessary guarantees over the next days, the EU will take further actions, including on the issue of recognition of the country's leadership in line with article 233 of the Venezuelan constitution" (Council of the EU, 2019c).

Maduro refused, and the EU followed through. On January 31 the European Parliament (the Parliament) recognized Guaidó as acting President of Venezuela (European Parliament, 2019a). On February 4, most MS did too (Pérez-Peña, 2019). For the rest of 2019, and so far in 2020, the EU and MS have continued to recognize Guaidó, sanctioned Maduro's regime, repeatedly adopted official condemnations of Maduro's authoritarianism and expressions of concern for the humanitarian emergency, and continued to provide large amounts of funding to the political and humanitarian Crisis.

In some ways January and February 2019 demonstrated the "disarray" in EU foreign policy (Herszenhorn, 2019). A minority of MS stopped short of recognizing Guaidó. Italy blocked a joint statement, forcing recognition to come individually from the majority of willing MS and the HR/VP to issue a complex and nuanced word salad (Ibid.). But more significant is the fact that the EU took such an undiplomatic, decisive, and influential position on this issue. Considering that this issue does not involve core interests which affect the EU—trade or security—but is merely a question of human rights in a small and for the EU geopolitically distant country in Latin America, the EU's foreign policy toward Venezuela since early 2019 is exceptional. How can we explain the EU's uncharacteristic foreign policy toward Venezuela since 2019? How did the EU get here? What was the EU's foreign policy toward Venezuela in 2017 and 2018, the first two years of the Crisis, and what does that reveal? How exceptional was it, and what does this mean?

Because of the dramatic gap between the EU's typical foreign policy in variously similar situations and its foreign policy toward Venezuela since early 2019, it is worth exploring how the EU got to its foreign policy toward Venezuela since early 2019 and how different this is. This is a critical question—does this represent a change in, or at least potential for the EU to change, its normally limited foreign policy performance, especially on human rights issues? As the Venezuela Crisis began in early 2017—going on for two years before this pivotal moment in early 2019—the first step to answering this important question is to track and evaluate the EU's foreign policy during the Venezuela Crisis in its first two years. During those years the EU's foreign policy toward Venezuela was atypical, and analyzing it specifically answers some questions about the challenges and possibilities of EU foreign policy and human rights more generally.

The EU is not typically so assertive and actionable in its foreign policy and it typically does not take risky and decisive measures on issues beyond its core interests. To start, it is exceptional for the EU to recognize an opposition movement as it did for Guaidó. In other situations, the EU

bestowed some legitimacy on democratic opposition movements, but it did not go so far as to immediately back a rival government as the de jure power in contrast to the de facto and previously de jure power of the regime. To do so is an extraordinary action from the EU. Italian political scientist Elena Baracani says the EU prefers to deal with states than with actors from society (Baracani, 2012, p. 313). For example, the EU diplomatically supported the Libyan opposition but stopped short of recognizing it as the formal government (Talmon, 2011). It would not be as shocking if the EU recognized Guaidó as something like the will of the people or a "legitimate representative," as it did for the Syrian opposition (European Council, 2012); but to give him outright formal recognition as the government is something else. Additionally, in other situations the EU is much slower, less united, and less forceful. For example, it was a year and a half into the Syrian Revolution before a few MS recognized the opposition, and even then it was not outright recognition as the formal government (Talmon, 2013, p. 221). Yet for Venezuela it was days after the AN inaugurated Guaidó. In these situations, the EU usually recognizes the opposition as something like the true representatives of the people, not as the actual government (Talmon, 2011). To do so, the opposition "must be broadly based, have effective following and popular support…and must have reasonable fighting strength" (Ibid.), the latter of which was not at all true in Venezuela. Similarly, Kosovo was only recognized as de jure sovereign from Serbia nearly a decade after genocide, war, military intervention, and constant diplomacy.

Aside from the recognition, this study will show that in 2017 and 2018, there was an unusually high amount of concrete action, level of attention and commitment, strength of the rhetorical stance from the EU about human rights in Venezuela, and utilization of tools such as recognition of internal Venezuelan procedures and authorities and working through international forums and with regional partners. As an example of the outsized EU commitment, to victims of ethnic cleansing, the Rohingya, the EU gave 43 million euros in 2019 (European Commission, 2019d), while in 2018 to the Venezuela Crisis the EU gave 55 million euros (European Commission, 2018b).

By reviewing typical EU foreign policy in similar situations to what it was toward Venezuela in 2017 and 2018, this study will show how unusual the strength of the EU's response was since the emergence of the political and humanitarian crisis in early 2017. This is a foreign policy issue of non-core interests—human rights—in a region economically and geopolitically

remote from the EU, so its actions are particularly unexpected. So this is a lesson on the possibility of the EU to develop its commitment to and impact on human rights in the world.

When it comes to the EU acting globally for human rights, EU international relations researcher Rosa Balfour quotes an unnamed Council official as saying, "'the EU does not have a real human rights and democracy policy. It has some bullet points'" (Balfour, 2012, p. 137). Reviewing previous EU foreign policy, this official is validated. Scholars widely uphold this conclusion. Yet this does not at all describe the foreign policy of the EU in response to the Venezuela Crisis. So how did the EU, a supranational organization usually so limited in its actions for human rights and democracy in third countries, especially beyond its neighborhood, come to respond so decisively here?

The EU's shortcomings, limits, and failures in international issues of human rights are well documented. As discussed in the literature review and part two of the analysis, the EU is usually not a bold, committed, or influential actor in response to problems of authoritarianism, especially outside its neighborhood. Part of the problem is not so much a decision—fundamentally the EU is simply a massive supranational organization with restricted competences. But part of it is—the EU is staunchly committed to diplomacy and rhetoric, even when such non-binding responses do not greatly influence the human rights situation on the ground.

The EU's decisions in early 2019 are significant for the EU itself, not just for Venezuela. Early 2019 represents a sea change for the EU. How the EU got there must be investigated. An exhaustive answer to this question would be expansive. The present study is limited in space. But this paper takes the first steps: it will analyze the EU's foreign policy toward Venezuela in 2017 and 2018 and undertake an introductory evaluation of the background on the issues involved.

The remainder of this chapter will provide an introduction to the Venezuela Crisis, EU foreign policy, and a brief discussion of what could be expected of EU foreign policy in response to the Venezuela Crisis. More detailed discussions of these topics will follow in the literature review and part one and part two of the analysis, to be followed by the findings on the EU's foreign policy toward Venezuela in 2017 and 2018 in part three and part four, respectively, of the analysis. Finally, the conclusion considers why EU foreign policy toward Venezuela was different, and what this means for EU foreign policy going forward.

Understanding the Venezuela Crisis starts with Hugo Chávez. When Chávez was elected in 1999, Venezuela was an elitist democracy, with staggering economic inequality, social discrimination, and political marginalization (McCoy & Meyers, 2004, p. 3-8). Through the 80s and 90s in particular the failures of the system escalated beyond socio-economic stability and the potential for political continuity (Kelly & Palma, 2004, p. 202-230). Chávez correctly identified the problems of exclusion, racism, and classism in Venezuela's late 20th century democracy. A majority of Venezuelans, especially the socially, economically, and politically neglected urban masses, agreed fervently and elected him president (Canache, 2004, p. 36-39). But he became an authoritarian leader. Chavista politics made populism authoritarian.

Chávez's system has been identified as a hybrid-authoritarian regime. Quickly he instituted a hyper-centralization, and he systemically used his extraordinary power. For example, random business were expropriated, within hours of Chávez merely laying eyes on them, simply by the force of his words (Carrol, 2013, p. 9-14). Courts were not independent and often directly controlled and politicized by the regime, especially to suppress dissent (UN News, 2009). He used arbitrary arrests and held political prisoners (Romero, 2010). Through new and modern ways, he destroyed freedom of the press (Campbell, 2012; Corrales, 2016, p. 79; Lansberg-Rodríguez, 2014; Toro, 2010). And Chávez accompanied oppression with social programs controlled by the government and strategically implemented for political purposes (Penfold-Becerra, 2007, pp. 69-80). When Chávez died, unfree and unfair elections brought his publicly designated successor, Maduro, to power. Maduro inherited Chávez's system and escalated both the economic control and political authoritarianism. Eventually, this lead to crisis in 2017 (Bonicelli, 2018; Krauze, 2018; Smith A.E., 2019). Part one of the analysis discusses this further.

The next component to this study is EU foreign policy, generally and regarding human rights issues. The Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), as the EU's foreign policy is formally known, is complicated. Currently, foreign policy operates as defined by the 2009 Lisbon Treaty (European Parliament, 2020a). Multiple institutions are allotted an important role in the process. As with everything with the EU, the fundamental fact of the system is that it is a supranational political organization rather than a Westphalian state; the EU does not have all the competences traditional states have. Beyond what the EU is allowed to do in foreign policy, it is a question or what it is permitted and what it is actually able to do. Besides the institutional arrangements, there is then the intangible ideological component of EU foreign policymaking.

For foreign policy, the EU's special institutions are the HR/VP and the European External Action Service (EEAS) she leads, the Council, the European Commission (the Commission), and the Parliament. The EEAS is like the EU's supranational diplomatic service, with over 140 missions (European Union, 2019b). High-level foreign policy is officially set by the Council (meaning policy is approved unanimously and intergovernmentally by MS) and implemented by the Commission, with the HR/VP and the EEAS (McBride, 2020). Parliament plays a "limited formal role in foreign policy decision-making" (European Parliament, January 2020). But it is still important. It often serves as the moral agitator, especially in issues of human rights, democracy, and peace (Jančić, 2016, pp. 131-135). Formally, the Parliament must approve the CFSP budget with the Council, it regularly reviews the EU's foreign policy, and it adopts resolutions (European Parliament, January 2020). The Council co-approves the budget, must approve policies, and can adopt conclusions on global issues. Illustrating how the EU faces the world stage, the EU is represented at the G7 by the Commission and the Council (Herszenhorn, 2017). This is the institutional arrangement of EU foreign policy. At its core, "EU foreign policy is mostly, though not exclusively, negotiated by diplomats and foreign ministers in a classic intergovernmental setting" (Bindi & Angelescu, 2012, p. 330): the Council is intergovernmental, not supranational like the Commission. Institutionally and politically, MS agreement is critical, so the various positions of MS makes this predictably difficult. A "collective action problem" is among the chief causes of weakness in EU foreign policy: MS will often disagree, and even if they agree on a goal they may disagree on means, and thus the EU can be left without being able to form a response (Lehne, 2017, pp. 1-11). The EU foreign policy institutions are limited because their power is only what MS agree to give to it.

Ideologically and politically, there are some general principles that strongly influence EU foreign policy in addition to the institutional operations. There is a general consensus that the EU punches below its weight, especially on issues beyond economics and outside its neighborhood (Marsh & Mackenstein, 2005, pp. 253-259). EU foreign policy is typically cautious, diplomatic, risk-averse, neutral, and not disruptive or influential. On human rights issues, the EU prefers to primarily work through state-to-state dialogue (European Commission, 2001a, pp. 8-9). Even in response to crises, the EU has demonstrated an "inability to move beyond a mainly declarative diplomacy when it came to acting effectively and with one voice in 'high politics' arenas" (Santander, 2010, pp. 91-92).

Also affecting EU foreign policy are contemporary political calculations. Domestically, there are serious pressures on EU foreign policymakers as they develop its foreign policy. Populism, having exploded since 2016, is generally Euro-skeptic, nationalist, and less interested in human rights in foreign policy. These domestic political groups are therefore generally against the EU taking a stronger stance on issues of human rights in the world. The potential of the EU executing its liberal-based foreign policy is limited by illiberal regimes within the Union (Meunier & Vachudova, 2018). Out of power populists also apply pressure which can decrease the willingness of policymakers to conduct a robust, supranational, and liberal foreign policy. Even without the 2010s' populism, Europeans are generally non-interventionist and less forceful in foreign policy. Additionally, EU foreign policy is affected by the debate over competences between the national and supranational level (Marsh and Mackenstein, 2005, pp. 238, 248-249). Finally, Brexit drama the last few years has at least temporarily diminished the EU's potential to be vigorous on non-core global issues.

Finally, there are increasingly stark global politics at play: great power competition, the Trump effect, and the rise of authoritarianism globally. Russia and China globally, and other authoritarian states regionally, are decisively more active in resisting global human rights foreign policies and either committing atrocities and abuses or shielding and supporting those who do (Diamond & Plattner & Walker, 2016, pp. 3-19; Cooley, 2016, pp. 117-134). Trump's America has retreated from multilateralism and defending the attempt at a liberal and legal world order. And, as the EU's strongest ally and source of hard power, America's retreat (or worse, defection) from generally promoting the liberal world order leaves the EU unable and unwilling to assertively defend human rights in the world. Finally, partly as a result of the first two factors, and other trends, conflict and authoritarianism have greatly increased across the world: in amount, severity, and impunity (Freedom House, 2020). Current national, EU, and global politics exercise a strong influence on the EU's decision-making on foreign policy.

What is EU foreign policy usually all about? First, the EU's chief priorities and most active and effective foreign policy limited to its neighborhood (Bindi & Angelescu, 2012, p. 333). Secondly, EU foreign policy is primarily concerned with the EU's core interests—trade and then security. Supranational security policy is limited because actionably, most of it remains a competence of MS (Øhrgaard, 2004, pp. 32-33). On trade, as the EU began as an economic union, this remains the core of its foreign policy institutional competence and political priority. As EU

foreign policy researcher Stephan Keukeleire and EU politics researcher Tom Delreux write, the economic components of EU foreign policy "have shaped EU foreign policy and, in some cases, are foreign policies in and of themselves. They constitute the major instruments of EU foreign policy yet can also hinder the achievement of EU foreign policy objectives" (Keukeleire & Delreux, 2014, p. 197). Core interests are what the EU prioritizes if forced to pick between core and non-core interest such as human rights. Analyst of German politics Stephen Szabo finds that EU countries are even becoming "market societies," where economic results are most important, so global human rights are not strenuously pursued (Szabo, 2015, pp. 144-146). For example, "the global German trading state will give priority to stable economic relationships over other considerations such as the political record of its partners, including the state of democracy, human rights, and labor rights in economic partner countries" (Ibid., pp. 7-10.) When the EU is involved on issues of human rights, it is often by a collaborative approach, usually not through confrontational, disruptive, or decisive means. "Projecting its principles beyond its borders and persuading others to share them," rather than forcefully pressing for reform, is the EU's signature strategy on human rights (Marsh and Mackenstein, 2005, p. 251). These themes are discussed in more detail in the literature review and part one and part two of the analysis.

American foreign policy professor Walter Russell Mead, writing about American foreign policy but also foreign policy traditions more broadly, explains "[m]uch of the contemporary fighting over foreign policy—as for example, with respect to China—reflects a conflict between the Hamiltonian quest to build a global commercial order and the Wilsonian view that that order must also be based on principles of democratic government and the protection of human rights" (Mead, 2002, p. 139.) Though using American terms of Hamiltonian versus Wilsonian, the concepts apply to the EU as well.

For example, the Dutch government, looking to prioritize human rights in EU foreign policy, has found "most of its partners are not willing to subordinate the common foreign policy to the promotion of human rights when the protection of human rights clashes with economic interests" (Coolsaet & Soetendorp, 2000, p. 136). Part of the answer to the research question then, of why a bold EU foreign policy has developed toward Venezuela, is surely that confronting the Maduro regime enacted increasingly little economic cost on the EU. Most of what the EU imports from Venezuela was petroleum and petroleum products (European Commission, 2019c)—things the EU can get from other sources (Eurostat, 2019 edition, 2.3). Already between 2009 and 2011

EU exports to Venezuela fell, the only Latin American country this happened to (Eurostat, 2015b). After the MERCOSUR-EU trade deal was completed in 2018 and Venezuela was no longer part of MERCOSUR, Venezuela was much less necessary for the EU to maintain and develop its regional trade with Latin American. In 2018, EU trade with Venezuela was only €2.36 billion; it had fallen from €11.08 billion in 2012; most important of all, "EU exports to Venezuela have decreased drastically from € 6.5 billion in 2012 to € 0.69 billion in 2019" (European Commission, 2019c). By 2018, imports had dropped to €1.6 billion, and exports had plummeted to €0.6 billion because of Venezuela's economic policies and economic crisis (Ibid.). Trade in services had fallen "from €4 billion in 2012 to €1.1 billion in 2018" (Ibid.) Looking at graphs of the illustrated trends over the 2010s decade make the reality stark (European Commission, 2020b, p. 3).

By 2019 the EU was relatively unrestrained by economic concerns in dealing with Maduro's regime. Additionally, since 2017, as almost all of Latin American staunchly opposes Maduro's dictatorship and its man-made humanitarian catastrophe, the EU has been free from geopolitical and geo-economic concerns of risking trade with other states and blocs in the region due to antagonizing them by confronting one of their neighbors.

Regardless of economic calculations or not, however, the EU's ability and practice of human rights and democracy with third countries in foreign policy is limited, Balfour finds. She explains that "the EU has a number of cross-cutting tools at its disposal to promote human rights and democracy in third countries: bilateral agreements… CFSP tools; assistance programmes to support human rights and democracy worldwide" (Balfour, 2012, pp. 36, 36-45). These tools match the EU's commitment: "the European Union seeks to uphold the universality and indivisibility of human rights," the Commission says (European Commission, 2001a, p. 3). Despite this ability and intention, however, through her case studies of the EU's actions in promoting human rights and democracy in Ukraine and Egypt, Balfour finds "the EU's stated aims of promoting democracy and human rights have never been followed up sufficiently" (Balfour, 2012, p. 136). Balfour says "high rhetoric has not been matched by EU action in responding to human rights and democracy shortcomings" (Ibid., p. 4).

Because of both limited will and capabilities, "the EU has considerably more difficulties in dealing with actors that do not share its norms than with those that do" (Marsh and Mackenstein, 2005, p. 258). The EU's only coercive mechanisms to confront states which violate human rights are economic costs or sanctions (Baracani, 2012, p. 311). Recently the EU has been using sanctions

much more (Russel, May 2018, p. 1). However, its sanctions are often more targeted than broad, and it is often eager to respond to developments and lift them (Ibid., pp. 2-3). For economic and political reasons, MS often resist sanctions even when the EU is trying to impose some (Portela, 2015, pp. 44-56, 59-61). Ultimately, due to institutional and ideological choices, the EU's most common and strongest tools are dialogue and some form of "naming and shaming." While important, "increasingly, it seems, some actors are almost completely immune to this kind of pressure" (Kumar, 2016). Despite this, the EU has yet to seriously reform to become significantly more forceful or active on human rights in foreign policy. Yet in the case of the Venezuela Crisis since 2017, this has not been the case.

Somehow the EU came to adopt an atypically active stance January 2019 (and has upheld it since). This paper's hypothesis is that beginning in 2017 the human rights situation and the humanitarian catastrophe worsened dramatically. As these tragedies escalated, they also turned from merely moral to political concerns—regional instability and the risk of national conflict increased sharply. Thus the Venezuela Crisis drifts into peripherally affecting core interests of the EU. This alarming development, plus increased media salience and commitment from regional partners (North and Latin American) as the Crisis intensified are likely what caused the EU to become steadily more involved and tougher in its foreign policy toward Venezuela after the eruption of the Crisis in early 2017. Tracking the EU's foreign policy toward the Venezuela Crisis over the next two years will help to illuminate how the EU came to its radically unusual stance beginning in 2019, and comparing this to EU foreign policy and human rights more broadly offers important lessons on the EU's potential. Possible factors leading to this anomaly, and what this means for predicting future behavior, are further discussed in the conclusion.

To answer the research question—what was the EU's foreign policy to Venezuela leading up to its exceptional actions in 2019, and how typical was it for the EU?—this study will examine EU foreign policy toward the Venezuela Crisis in 2017 and 2018 and. This is a case study of how the EU responds to global human rights issues. This theme is widely applicable. Systematic human rights abuse, by state actors in particular, is increasing across the world. With the rise of authoritarianism and the severe weakening of the liberal democratic world order (a system which was patchwork at best even at its height), it is only becoming a more frequent and urgent question. An oddly vigorous example of EU foreign policy, given its traditional behavior and ongoing confrontations to further integration and the realization of its global potential, is worth considering.

The literature review chapter further discusses EU foreign policy from multiple angles relevant to the Venezuela Crisis, especially on human rights issues. The methodology chapter explains the parameters and approach of this study. Part one of the analysis chapter briefly reviews EU foreign policy toward Venezuela before the Crisis, and provides a background of the Venezuela Crisis and mapping of its course in 2017 and 2018. Part two reviews EU foreign policy when it comes to human rights issues, thematically and with variously relevant examples. Part three tracks and evaluates EU foreign policy toward Venezuela in 2017. Part four tracks and evaluates EU foreign policy toward Venezuela in 2018. Finally, the conclusion section summarizes the findings and reiterates why they are significant, explores possible explanations for why this case was different, and explains what this all means for EU foreign policy going forward.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

International relations professor Roberto Dominguez says EU foreign policy toward Latin America should be considered first through the prism of "interregionalism" (Dominguez, 2015, pp. 1-2). Of course, the problem is that there is a significant disparity between the levels of European and Latin America integration (Dominguez, 2015, pp. 8-17). Economically in particular, but also politically, the Latin America-EU relationship is relatively more important for Latin America than for the EU (Ibid., pp. 20-24). And Dominguez believes this asymmetry reduces the strength of the relationship despite increasing ties (Ibid., p. 2). Political scientist Sebastian Santander agrees that the relationship is economic based, and is impacted by Latin America's limited regionalism (Santander, 2010, pp. 89-90, 92-96). In fact, international relations professor Anne Haglund Morrissey says, promoting Latin American regionalism is a demand from the EU, believing this makes relations easier and promotes security and development (Morrissey, 2010, p. 159, 162-164). Furthermore, political economist Björn Hettne, global studies professor Fredrik Söderbaum, and political scientist Patrik Stålgren say the EU is not sufficiently united or knowledgeable about Latin America to be able to respond effectively to crises or serious challenges (Hettne & Söderbaum & Stålgren, 2010, p. 261). Somewhat differently, Morrissey says that "the EU today constitutes the most important donor in the region," and the extent of the regional and subregional donor relationship means Latin America is not absent from EU foreign policy thinking (Morrissey, 2010, pp. 179-183).

Dominguez considers instances when the Latin America-EU relationship cannot function normally—with authoritarian Latin American countries. In such cases, though the EU admits its displeasure with the human rights situation, it typically does not take a firmer stance, trying to maintain the relationship through some compartmentalization on the one hand, and on the other offering cautious and non-binding critiques (Dominguez, 2015, pp. 144-171). With a detailed case study of the EU-MERCOSUR relationships, Santander gives a similar example of the limits of the relationship (Santander, 2010, pp. 96-111). It takes years (if not decades, as in this case) for the EU to develop a relationship and achieve real results when disagreements or unfamiliarity are

present. Considering Santander's findings then, the EU's policy toward Venezuela is noteworthy. From 2016 to 2017—in just one year—the EU's commitment and stance evolved radically.

Santander agrees with Dominguez that the EU wants to increase its relationship with Latin America chiefly for economic reasons, but Santander also says the EU has political motivations as well: the EU wants to develop new markets for its companies, compete with the US in a region it traditionally dominates, and use the region to increase the EU's ability as a global actor (Ibid., pp. 89-90, 106-108). After all, the relationship is actually sourced in political concerns, Santander notes: Spain, followed by other MS, was concerned about the wars in Central America in the 80s, and EU attention to the relationship has grown from there (Ibid., pp. 92-96).

As political and economic reform emerged across Latin America beginning in the 90s, MS saw "an opportunity for new outlets for their domestic companies," Santander says (Ibid., pp. 96-97). As should be expected, relations were economic-focused. Dominguez agrees that the core of EU-Latin American engagement is chiefly economic affairs, as exemplified by the content of various Association Agreements and summits, the two actions he considers most important to the relationship (Dominguez, 2015, pp. 56-58, 69). Yet human rights and democracy concerns are always part of these discussions, he shows: sometimes the EU has even withheld agreement until one or a group of Latin American countries have made concessions on human rights and democracy issues (Ibid., p. 72). That is significant, demonstrating that even in an asymmetric, neglected, challenging, and economic-based relationship, the EU can give force to human rights in foreign policy. On one hand, the crux of the EU interest is economic, as shown in its dealings with, for example, Brasil, Colombia, and Perú, but it always includes aspects of the relationship such as democracy and human rights provisions, humanitarian aid, and conflict resolution mechanism (Ibid., p. 97-124).

Echoing the trend Dominguez and Sanatander see, international relations professor Karen E. Smith says "[t]he place of human rights considerations in the EU's external relations has radically changed" (Smith, 2003, p. 202). She finds there has been a rapid increase in the prominence of human rights in EU thinking and action in foreign policy (Ibid., pp. 186-187). Santander traces this change to the Treaty of Maastricht; since then, EU diplomacy with other nations, which previously was mostly all economic, now includes political points (Santander, 2010, p. 92). Hettne et al. agree that for Latin America and the EU, "the origins of the partnership are in trade relations" (Hettne et. al., 2010, p. 260). Yet, "[g]radually, interregional cooperation

has spread to emphasize other sectors," even though it is still an economic-focused relationship and the other sectors are undeveloped to varying degrees (Ibid.)

Overall, the authors note that the EU is not an influential actor in Latin American affairs (Ibid., pp. 259-261). Such a limitation of the EU's abilities to influence events or contribute to solutions to tough problems are sourced in the fact that, relatively, Latin America is not a region of core interest for the EU. The EU was not made to be a global actor, they say (Ibid., p. 249). "The EU should be understood as a global actor in the field of trade," but in the fields of international security and political issues the EU possesses a "low level of actorness" (Ibid., p. 251-252). The EU's foreign policy in such regions on such topics is pragmatic, and severely limited by the nature of the EU (Ibid., pp. 265-268). Since Latin America-EU trade is less important for the EU, the relationship is too.

These findings by various scholars correlate with the wider literature on the EU's foreign policy, especially on issues with distant regions on non-core interests: the EU is not designed to be very active in such situations, and that has generally been the case. This is broadly the nature of the Latin America-EU relationship. Thus, influence on the Venezuela Crisis could be expected to be negligible. Even EU attention would, according to previous patterns, not be high. Thus the EU's response toward Venezuela since 2017 is significant.

Echoing Balfour's findings that "high rhetoric has not been matched by EU action in responding to human rights and democracy shortcomings" (Balfour, 2012, P. 4), Baracani says democratic assistance is the EU's most common active tool to promote human rights, and yet even this action is rather rare (Baracani, 2012, pp. 312-314). A general scholarly consensus appears, that the EU's rhetoric and values may not match its actions, effort, and effectiveness in globally promoting human rights, and part of this is due to the institutional nature of the EU.

Smith concurs. She says the EU uses "primarily diplomatic instruments" to promote international respect for human rights (Smith, 2015, p. 155). In fact, she notes "dialogue is the EU's *modus vivendi*" when it comes to addressing foreign states' human rights abuses (Ibid., p. 161). Whatever the EU pursues, Smith thinks it is highly relevant to understand that the changing international order—the noted rise of authoritarianism, breakdown of the liberal unipolar world, and growing international and domestic backlash against global human rights—has weakened the EU's ability to successfully promote human rights (Ibid., pp. 157-159).

Baracani says the EU's only coercive tool to promote democracy is sanctions (Baracani, 2012, p. 311). But, Baracani says, "[t]here is no doubt that, at least rhetorically, democracy promotion is at the center" of EU foreign policy (Ibid., p. 306). Smith similarly describes human rights as a fundamental part of the EU's foreign policy, despite failures and needs for reform (Smith, 2003, pp. 192-193, 202). Why then, is this mission often pursued without vigor? Perhaps because, as Baracani says, democracy and human rights are not goals in themselves, but "an instrument for achieving their primary foreign policy goals, security and economic prosperity" (Baracani, 2012, p. 306). Her conclusion is notable because it goes beyond the fundamental values theory most other scholars hold, seeing even the EU's altruistic foreign policy work as nevertheless sourced in Westphalian mentalities of the best way to pursue its own core interests. The EU's novel policy toward the Venezuela Crisis, according to this theory, can be explained in two ways: either the EU truly cared about the human tragedy, or the EU became more opposed to Maduro because it was concerned about the effect on regional and global prosperity and peace that his behavior and the breakdown it caused increasingly posed. Given the course of events—a spiraling of human suffering and the potential for wider effects—either or both explanations could be true.

"This is the activity of persuasion," Smith says, referring to human rights in the EU's foreign policy (Smith, 2015, p. 155). She finds it is often unsuccessful. This appears validated by cases like Syria, Cuba, Turkey, and the Russian-occupied areas of Ukraine. Here the EU has paid attention and tried to exert influence, yet the abuse has either continued or gone on, with narrow or temporary mitigation if any. Persuasion works "only when combined with incentives or conditionality;" it "needs to be combined with incentives or pressure," Smith says, but this is often limited because of the challenging requirement of achieving internal unity on any concrete action (Ibid., pp. 155-157). "Divisions between member states usually result in a preference for dialogue over confrontation, and incentives over sanctions," she explains (Ibid., pp. 160-161).

The EU has two main instruments—dialogue and declarations (Ibid., p 161). Dialogue's effects are often severely limited. Even when they are part of association agreements, for example, "it is not clear what follows from this" (Ibid., pp. 161-163). Though declarations and demarches are employed frequently as well, Smith says they have little effect if they encompass the entire strategy on their own (Ibid., pp. 163-164). Increasing aid as a reward or decreasing it as a punishment is inconsistently applied so of negligible value (Ibid., pp. 164-165), and sanctions are used "sparingly" because "it takes a lot for the EU to be moved to impose negative measures for

human rights violations" (Ibid., p. 166). Economic and security interests "contributes to the reluctance to pressure third countries" over human rights issues (Ibid.). Finally, Smith notes the EU sometimes uses the United Nations' (UN) Human Rights Council (HRC); but because of its supranational challenges, along with simply being outnumbered by third countries less concerned with or opposed to promoting global human rights, the EU's actions there are limited, and its effect even more so (Ibid., pp. 167-171).

Few seem to disagree that the EU falls short, in both effectiveness and even attempt, in the field of democracy promotion and human rights. This is especially the case when the EU moves beyond its neighborhood. International relations professor Laura C. Ferreira-Pereira has found that two changes in the EU's foreign policy in recent decades: the EU has moved from being a regional to a global actor, and values are increasingly important in its foreign policy (Ferreira-Pereira, 2012, p. 293). Yet, Ferreira-Pereira says, the EU's influence in this field is still best exercised by being a model power, demonstrating democratic values and assisting those who seek to replicate them (Ibid., pp. 294-303). The problem then is that the EU is poorly equipped to promote democracy if a state rejects the EU's values and is not willing to construct a similarly free society.

Demonstrating this drawback, foreign policy researcher Steve Marsh and international business professor Hans Mackenstein find that "the EU can exert marginal influence at best" and "the 'price' it can exact….is correspondingly small" when it comes to promoting human rights in, for example, North Korea (Marsh & Mackenstein, 2005, pp. 209-215). In cases of failed states, great powers, distant regions, and stubborn dictators, the EU is not able to secure a real amount of change on the ground. Similarly, in the case of China, they say there is a "lack of EU progress" in successfully promoting human rights there (Ibid., pp. 208-209). This makes sense: China has infamously achieved economic progress while in fact drastically increasing its authoritarianism, so would not apply to the opportunities for successful modelling that Ferreira-Pereira identified (Ferreira-Pereira, 2012, pp. 297-300). Meanwhile, echoing others' analyses, Marsh and Mackenstein describe the EU's foreign policy as "engagement based" (Marsh & Mackenstein, 2005, p. 216). The EU has "established credentials as a global economic superpower" (Ibid., p. 241). Out of the EU's own interests, it does not withhold these benefits from China contingent on human rights. Globally, the EU's identity is based in its economic capabilities (Ibid., p. 226). While it doesn't seriously tie relations in this field to political fields of human rights and democracy, regimes refusing to reform will not be influenced to by the EU. When it comes to the EU's ability

to influence outcomes around the globe, "the most important determinant of all is political will," which has, the authors find, so far been limited (Ibid., p. 262). This echoes the findings, for example, of Smith (Smith, 2015, pp. 160-161).

When EU foreign policy does deal with human rights issues, it operates with "a distinct preference for multilateralism and for interregional co-operation," Marsh and Mackenstein say (Marsh & Mackenstein, 2005, p. 62). Its tools are declaratory diplomacy, working through international organizations, and demarches and other symbolic actions. Finally, the EU has one capability which is not merely non-binding: the EU's "most obvious asset is its economic strength" (Ibid., p. 52). To influence situations where human rights abusers are not voluntarily reforming, "the real teeth behind EU external relations policies is the threat of economic sanctions and progressive politicisation of trade" (Ibid., 66, 62-67). Smith says, "[t]here is a clear preference for a positive approach," the carrot over the stick (Smith, 2003, pp. 188-190). The negative is used sparingly, and both approaches are plagued by "inconsistency" to be severely limited in their effectiveness (Ibid., pp. 193-197). Sanctions have become increasingly more common, but have "what appears to be a not so successful track record" (Leenders, 2014, p. 4). Thus, even when the EU takes a harder line, it still may find it difficult to conduct an influential foreign policy.

The challenge is foundational. Nicola Verola, of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, discusses the watershed the Treaty of Lisbon is for EU foreign policy, a transformation acknowledged by all academic and political analysts on the subject (Verola, 2012, pp. 40-50). Verola notes "member states don't trust each other (or supranational institutions) and hesitate to fully commit themselves to a common foreign policy" (Ibid., pp. 42-43.) The Treaty of Lisbon established HR/VP and EEAS, and expanded EU foreign policy beyond CFSP (Ibid., p. 41); but MS still retain autonomy in foreign policy in many ways, especially if they choose to assert such privileges (Ibid., p. 43). Verola concludes, as most analysts since have as well, that the strength of the common foreign policy depends on creating a unified political will from MS to support foreign policy in the Council (Ibid., p. 49). Smith also traces the severe limitations in the EU's foreign policy to its supranational nature, saying MS unity is the key to taking an effective stance (Smith, 2003, pp. 202-203).

After the Treaty of Lisbon, the EU is in a new era of possibilities. This applies to its foreign policy as well. At the same time, traditional limits to the EU's foreign policy—especially on human rights, especially in geopolitically distant regions—remain. Altogether, these sources clearly show

why the activist EU foreign policy toward Venezuela in the two years of the Crisis before its dramatic actions in early 2019 is worth investigating further, because it is definitively an irregularity for the EU.

Chapter Three: Methodology and Research Design

In the context of the EU's exceptional foreign policy toward Venezuela since early 2019—recognizing the democratic opposition as the de jure government and de-recognizing Maduro's still de facto and previously de jure regime—considering the EU's foreign policy toward Venezuela for the first two years, 2017 and 2018, of the ongoing Crisis which instigated such a move offers lessons relevant to EU foreign policy and human rights. To better understand the EU's novel foreign policy toward Venezuela and draw wider conclusions relevant to the important topic of EU foreign policy and human rights, this research project uses discourse, narrative, and critical comparative analysis to examine EU foreign policy toward Venezuela in 2017 and 2018, contextualized within a broader review of EU foreign policy and human rights. Similar to what the EU itself concluded in 2018 (Engstrom & Bonacquisti, 2018, pp. 50-54), this project finds that the EU's foreign policy toward Venezuela in 2017 and 2018 was, while not unprecedented, atypically active and forceful. This finding is useful because it contributes to addressing the ongoing question of the frequent weakness of EU foreign policy, especially in the realm of human rights.

For the theoretical basis, this study is grounded in theories of EU foreign policy as outlined in the introduction, literature review, and part two of the analysis. As a supranational organization, the EU's strongest areas of competence and ability is in economic rather than political issues: "supranational in the policies of the single market and intergovernmental in the policies concerning traditional core state powers" (Fabbrini, 2019, p. vii). The consensus necessary to create a political union ("A European federal union can emerge only through a founding decision, not through a cumulative process" (Ibid., p. 125)) has proven elusive, least of all because of different MS' and political groups' conclusions from the Euro Crisis (Welfens, 2016, pp. 66-67, 73). In foreign policy, this principle remains true, the EU is "still much more accomplished and formidable as an economic actor than it is as a politico-security actor" (Marsh and Mackenstein, 2005, p. 253). On human rights, besides being an issue which is neither a political priority nor institutional strength of the EU, a few key factors affect its performance. The EU's most assertive responses and deepest attention on political issues are reserved for its neighborhood. In regions more geopolitically distant, the EU's performance and success on human rights wanes—in both what it can control, its

resolve, and what it cannot fully control, its influence. For example, the EU's ability to successfully press global human rights issues at the UN has decreased significantly (Gowan & Brantner, 2008, pp. 1-6). Additionally, the EU's work for human rights globally is limited if confronting abuse entails political conflict with parties the EU intends to cooperate with as partners on its core interests of economic and security matters. Finally, there are the intrinsic domestic factors—resistance from those opposed to increased competence or strength for EU foreign policy, disagreement between MS, and finally the institutional parameters of what capabilities the current EU even potentially has. In EU foreign policy, "[d]eclarations frequently take the place of action" (Lehne, 2017, p. 14). On human rights issues in particular, the EU typically pursues such goals through non-binding procedures, and these often have a limited effect (Smith, 2015, pp. 155-165). The EU itself admits its limitations: for example, evaluating the success of its human rights policy toward China, the EU said "there is still a wide gap between generally accepted international standards and the **human rights** situation on the ground" (European Commission, 2001b, p. 10). Overall, the EU's response to situations like Venezuela's—a human rights issue in a geopolitically distant country—is generally limited.

A question must be answered, however—given this state of affairs, how is it that the EU has come to respond so assertively to the Venezuela Crisis since early 2019? The amount of attention and action, the strength of its position, and the extent of its concrete and more undiplomatic actions are uncommon. The answer can be partially found by investigating the EU's response to the two prior (and first) years of the Crisis, in 2017 and 2018. This research will show that the EU's foreign policy from early 2017 to late 2018 generally escalated to become more active and assertive. Quickly from the beginning in early 2017, its responsive was atypical. Tracking the EU's foreign policy toward Venezuela in 2017 and 2018 and evaluating it along with comparisons to relevant examples and themes, is the methodology of this study. It pursues the answer to the research question and opens the way to consider the wider importance of this topic, as done in the conclusion.

The analysis chapter consists of four parts. Part three and part four each evaluate one year of the study, 2017 and 2018 respectively. Part one and part two provide crucial background on this issue through critical context and narrative analysis. The reason for these two background subchapters are to illuminate the issues at play and provide comparisons so that this specific study of EU foreign can be properly placed in context, which is necessary in order to be able to appreciate

the significance of the findings in parts three and four and begin to make wider conclusions about EU foreign policy on human rights more generally. Parts one and two of the analysis allow the findings of parts three and four to be more effectively evaluated.

In part three and part four of the analysis, this study will analyze the public foreign policies of the top EU foreign policy institutions (the Parliament, the Council, and the Commission, including the HR/VP), along with any MS whose response is unique or noteworthy from the point of view of the supranational EU response, toward Venezuela. For an initial study of such a dynamic process, examining the behavior of these actors offers a sufficiently thorough overview of EU foreign policy toward Venezuela during these two years. An exhaustive study of the subject (and expanded to 2019 and 2020) would be the next step to exploring the themes motivating the research question. Additionally, a complete account would examine the private discussions (within the EU, between the EU and various factions in Venezuela, and the EU and its partners), the shifting of attitudes, domestic politics and public opinion, other actors' responses, media salience and representation, and other similar factors which all impactfully contribute to the making of foreign policy on this issue, especially in such a complex situation. However, this study, by tracking and evaluating the EU's public foreign policy in 2017 and 2018 from its top institutions on the matter, takes an important step by showing the development from typical in 2016 to exceptional in 2019. Using the Commission, the Council, and the Parliament allow for a sufficiently comprehensive examination of EU foreign policy toward Venezuela during 2017 and 2018. In part two, background provided on EU foreign policy, especially in the field of human rights and in geopolitically removed regions, and comparisons to situations which are in various ways relevant to Venezuela, further show not just how significant the EU's response in 2019 is, but how radically novel the policy during the two years leading up to 2019 were as well. Such a topic requires far more extensive investigations. The methodology of this study nevertheless offers conclusive findings and useful steps in understanding this topic and provides a useful and legitimate first analysis to answer the research question.

Part one of the analysis will offer background and examine the course of the Venezuela Crisis, and review the EU's foreign policy toward Venezuela before 2016. The Venezuela Crisis began in 2017 and continues to this day. It was particularly volatile and in general steadily escalated, from the beginning of 2017 well into 2019. Venezuela is not the average authoritarian country: for over a decade there was dramatic democratic backsliding, then for years

authoritarianism sharply escalated, the party-movement nature of the regime meant there was a severely polarized society, and an exceptionally catastrophic humanitarian crisis emerged as well. This is how the Crisis emerged in early 2017. Tacking the EU's response is inseparable from an understanding of Venezuela's particular atmosphere leading up the Crisis and a chronology of developments in the Crisis since its start. Finally, considering the EU's foreign policy toward Venezuela through 2016, during the time of growing authoritarianism and economic breakdown leading to the start of the Crisis, illustrates exactly where the EU was politically when its response started to dramatically evolve. Just comparing the EU's foreign policy toward Venezuela of 2016 to 2017 reveals a radical difference. The EU's severely limited response on human rights in Venezuela before 2017, even as abuse steadily increased, shows that the EU was not somehow naturally inclined to respond forcefully for human rights in Venezuela and illustrates the novelty of its stance since 2017. And that distinctiveness is what makes this case important.

Part two provides an overview of relevant themes of EU foreign policy. EU foreign policy toward Latin America, EU foreign policy toward geopolitically remote regions in general, and human rights and EU foreign policy more broadly are discussed. Finally, to illustrate these themes, there are a few reviews of EU foreign policy toward specific human rights crises. The same method of analysis as in parts three and four is used for part two: analyzing the public language and actions of the top EU foreign-policymaking institutions. While these case studies are brief, they are instructive. For the Rohingya Crisis, the Colombian Civil War, China's mass internment of Uyghurs, Saudi Arabia's war in Yemen, and contemporary authoritarianism in Zimbabwe, each example demonstrates a particular aspect of EU foreign policy and human rights: geopolitically distant regions, political crises in Latin America, atrocities and abuses by valued economic partners, atrocities and abuses by valued security partners, and an instance of a level of human rights and humanitarian crisis similar to Venezuela's, respectively. Such relevant examples comprehensively contextualize human rights and EU foreign policy and conclusively set general parameters of what EU foreign policy toward Venezuela since 2017 could be expected to be. When compared to the findings of parts three and four, part two's concrete findings combined with the theoretical analysis (complimented by the discussions in the literature review and the introduction) starkly illustrate exactly how significantly novel the EU's foreign policy toward Venezuela is—not only its dramatic position since early 2019, but also its less sensational but similarly exceptional behavior during the two years prior.

After considering what EU foreign policy toward Venezuela in 2017 and 2018 could be expected to be, done in parts one and two, to what it actually was, done in parts three and four, this research project finds that the EU's foreign policy toward Venezuela in 2017 and 2018 was atypically proactive in supporting human rights and attempting to achieve real progress on the issue by exerting influence. On one hand, this is not surprising. The foundation of the answer to the research question is present in the question itself: EU foreign policy toward Venezuela since early 2019 has been uniquely assertive, it is already known. The question, however, is how did the EU get there? The findings of parts three and four show exactly how, and reveal the depths and development of the process of the EU's shift during that period. These findings come by intensive analysis of EU foreign policy toward Venezuela of the Council, the Parliament, the Commission (including the HR/VP) and noteworthy behavior of individual MS. Actions are deeply analyzed through context, comparative, and discourse analysis to reveal the novel and meaningful strength of the EU stance in this case study. Discourse analysis is the most frequently used tool of this main part of the study, and context and comparative analysis are the primary instruments to discuss the significance of the results. The relevance of this study is to show the ability of the EU, even within current constraining structures and pressures, to adopt a foreign policy which more effectively promotes human rights in the world. The EU is not a Westphalian state or customary political union with normative abilities. As Keukeleire and Delreux say, while the EU has an impressive amount of programs and tools for its foreign policy, "[a] more detailed analysis, however, raises doubts about labeling the EU as a normative power" (Keukeleire & Delreux, 2014, p. 140). Yet at the same time, while the EU is not a conventional nation or state, these authors find that "looking at the EU's extensive toolbox, the EU emerges as a foreign policy actor that is clearly able to exceed the declaratory level" (Ibid., p. 138). Other scholars agree that the EU is not destined to be the weak international player sometimes even sober and pro-European analysts find (Marsh and Mackenstein, 2005, pp. 248-250). The EU has the power to far more successfully pursue its explicitly avowed goals to promote human rights in the world far more effectively than its track record suggests, and this study demonstrates that.

Finally, parts three and four each conclude with a brief discussion of situational influences on the EU's foreign policy toward Venezuela during that year. Many strong global and domestic factors were intrinsically tied to the EU's considerations and certainly applied pressure to its decision-making. While the course of the policymaking process is the next step in this theme and

outside this study's limits, noting these themes here, in a study merely detailing adopted policies and noting their significance, still contributes to appreciating the extent of the resolve displayed by the EU's actions and what this episode could mean for the EU.

This study does not explore the success or consequences of the EU's foreign policy. That is a different topic, and would take a far lengthier discussion. Nor can this project examine all aspects of the EU's foreign policy toward Venezuela. Because of a lack of access to the private echelons of high-level EU policymaking, this study looks only at the public actions of the EU's highest institutions and actors. That is sufficiently valuable because public acts are critical, often even defining, to foreign policy, especially for a state that operates more through diplomacy and declarations than covert political or military measures. It cannot look at other relevant factors and components of forming foreign policy, such as media salience, domestic opinion, or behind-the-scenes debates because there is not the space to give these even the briefest consideration which these themes would require to be adequately incorporated into the analysis. They would form a separate paper on their own. But examining the basics of a notably active and influential EU response to a specific human rights and humanitarian crisis by looking at the public actions of top institutions (which includes MS behaving notably) is sufficient for examining the EU's response to this issue.

Because of the events and situation in Venezuela, studying the prominence of human rights in EU foreign policy toward the Venezuela Crisis in 2017 and 2018 can coincidentally be broken down by year. The course of the Crisis rather neatly corresponds to considering calendar years 2017 and 2018 as distinct political periods of time during the Crisis. In 2017, the Venezuela Crisis was marked by an increase in authoritarianism of the Maduro regime and an accompanying state-induced breakdown in social and economic conditions. In 2018, the Venezuela Crisis was marked by a sharp escalation of the Maduro regime's authoritarianism and the eruption of a full-fledged humanitarian crisis due to the economic breakdown.

Overall, this analysis develops a well-defended finding on what the EU's foreign policy was toward Venezuela in 2017 and 2018. Given the clear contrast to what is usual, as shown, these findings are significant.

Chapter Four: Analysis

Part One: Background—Maduro's Venezuela, 2013-2016; EU Foreign Policy toward Venezuela before 2017; Course of the Venezuela Crisis, 2017-2018

Maduro's Venezuela, 2013-2016

By early 2017 Maduro had been president of Chávez's hybrid-authoritarian system—"characterized by a dramatic concentration of power and open disregard for basic human rights guarantees" ("Venezuela: Chávez's Authoritarian…," 2013)—for four years. Under Maduro authoritarianism had notably intensified since the death of Chávez: Freedom House ranked Venezuela "partly free" in 2013, (*Freedom in the World: 2013*, 2013, p. 18) but "not free" in 2017 (*Freedom in the World: 2017*, 2017, pp. 6, 8, 14-15, 24). Meanwhile, an economic crisis was rapidly developing. The chavista economy of the 2010s was a rentier state, dependent on oil (Corrales & Penfold, 2015, pp. 48-98). Since the global oil price collapse in the middle of the decade, the country's economy faced a severe crisis (Ordoñez, 2014; Monaldi, September 2015, pp. 3-4, 16). Combined with Chávez's system of an oil-based economy (Johnson, 2018), increased corruption and mismanagement under Maduro (Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project, 2016; Rathbone, 2016; "Having wrecked the…," 2018; Borger, 2016) further deteriorated Venezuela's macro-economic situation and had caused a worsening economic crisis by 2017.

The economic intervention and systemic corruption of Maduro's system turned a plummet in revenue to an accelerating shortage of basic goods, such as food and medicine (Krauze, 2018). Since Maduro's assumption in 2013, price-controls and other forms of heavy-handed intervention were the government's chief economic policy (Corrales, 2015), compounding the escalating inflation, debt, and currency crisis (Kraul & Mogollon, 2016; Gupta, 2014; Gladstone, 2016). The situation snowballed as foreign investment and imports correspondingly plunged, cutting Venezuela off from sources of food and medicine. By the beginning of 2017 the economy was becoming an acute crisis in everyday life for Venezuelans (Manetto, 2017). Hunger, shortages, and queues became normal for most people in the country (Fishwick, 2016).

In addition to a worsening socio-economic situation, Maduro's Venezuela of 2013-2016 was increasingly authoritarian. Regime forces killed dozens during demonstrations in 2014. Already in 2014 *The New Republic* concluded Venezuela was not democratic (Abadi & Lira & Obuchi, 2014). Through 2014 and 2015 the press was further restricted, *Deutsche Welle* noting "press freedom is dying in Venezuela" (Walter, 2015). Heavy repression accompanied the December 2015 legislative elections (which the democratic opposition still won, owing to their popularity) ("Venezuela: Events of…," 2015). After the October 2016 cancelling of the recall movement, *The Washington Post* called Venezuela a "full-blown dictatorship" (Toro, 2016). For years before the Crisis that emerged in 2017, Maduro's Venezuela had been trending in the bad direction, with rising authoritarianism and crushing economic hardship.

Until 2017, only a small amount of effective EU foreign policy toward Venezuela existed, especially regarding human rights and democracy issues. During Chávez's approximately 15 year rule there were even less human rights concerns, and for Maduro's first three years this broadly remained the case. Concerns expressed about human rights issues in Venezuela were tepid and occasional. Before the Venezuela Crisis erupts in 2017, the EU's foreign policy toward Venezuela was as could be expected. Thus, the EU's behavior exhibited in early 2019 is notable, and the road leading to that dramatic response of January 2019 has to be examined closely.

<u>EU Foreign Policy Toward Venezuela before 2017</u>

During Chávez and the first years of Maduro, the EU did not categorically challenge the Venezuelan government on human rights issues. From 1999 to 2015 the relationship became increasingly strained, but this was more because of economic disagreements than confrontation over political issues (Dominguez, 2015, pp. 151-159). Dominguez describes the relationship as "stagnation and in some cases distancing" (Ibid., p. 152). MS were divided, some criticizing and some engaging the Chávez government (Ibid., p. 155); the trade relationship had little hope of progress and in fact began to decline (Ibid., pp. 156-157); there were a few direct supranational challenges on human rights, such as some statements from then-HR/VP Catherine Ashton (Ibid., p. 155).

The EU did not consistently call out Venezuela's human rights record before 2017. The few statements that publicly emerged criticizing the government are diplomatic, in line with what can be expected from the EU toward a third-party moderately authoritarian regime. With Chávez's

re-election in an unfair atmosphere on October 7 2012, for example, a day later Ashton released a brief statement congratulating him, the only mention of Chávez's authoritarianism coming from a demand "to reach out to all segments of Venezuelan society" and an insistence that "with victory comes responsibility" (Ashton, 2012). Otherwise, as revealed by the 2007 Commission's strategy paper for relations with Venezuela for the next five years, while the EU was willing to acknowledge that "there has been criticism of some aspects of the human rights situation" (European Commission, 2007, p. 14), work on human right was limited to some funding for civil society organizations (Ibid., p. 18), and the EU remained staunchly committed (the text reads almost optimistic) to developing the bilateral relationship (Ibid., p 24). On human rights, EU-Venezuela relations were mostly limited to a few statements by the HR/VP, EIDHR contact and funding to some Venezuelan civil society groups (Dominguez, 2015, p. 158), and small sections in occasional Commission reports on human rights (General Secretariat of the Council, 2013, pp. 257-258).

During Chávez's rule, the Parliament passed a few resolutions on Venezuela, but they were all on narrow issues, much briefer, and generally more neutral, not in opposition to the government like the broad condemnations it voiced in 2017 and 2018. For example, a resolution responding to the shuttering of Radio Caracas (politically-motivated, the government arbitrarily refused to renew its license ("Chávez cierra el…," 2007)), the Parliament adopted a resolution on May 24 2007 which only "[r]eminds the Government of Venezuela of its obligation to respect, and ensure respect for, freedom of expression and opinion and freedom of the press," the only direct criticism being it "strongly deplor[es] the Government's total unwillingness to engage in dialogue" with opposition press (European Parliament, 2007). In the resolution of October 23 2008, responding to the government disqualifying many opposition figures from elections, the Parliament "expresses concern" and talks as if the government is not at fault, saying the act was "administratively imposed" and "urges the government examine" it, the only condemnation being for the murder of a student leader, and still refrains from directly incriminating the government (European Parliament, 2008). On May 24 2012 the Parliament adopted a resolution on human rights and Venezuela (European Parliament, 2012). But this was on a technical issue, about Venezuela's moves to withdraw from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, and the text only acknowledges human rights abuse by Chávez indirectly and once, by warning of "the further deterioration of its [Venezuela's] human right record," without detailing what that was (Ibid.).

The Council's global human rights report for 2013 noted "severe overcrowding in prisons, excessive use of force by the police including extra-judicial killings, inefficiency and partiality of the judiciary, infringements on the freedom of expression, forced disappearances as well as insufficient protection and harassment of human rights defenders" (General Secretariat of the Council, 2013, p. 257). But, the report explains, "[t]he EU does not have a structured political dialogue with the Venezuelan Government," so discussing human rights are "limited to ad hoc opportunities" (Ibid., p. 258). Similarly, these issues are not followed by further declarations or actions from the Commission, Council, or Parliament. After Maduro's claim of victory in fraudulent and violent elections to succeed Chávez immediately after his death, the farthest Ashton's statement goes is to "regret the loss of life" and be "concerned about the growing polarisation of Venezuelan society" (Ashton, 2013).

On February 27 2014 the Parliament adopted a resolution, in response to extreme violence against peaceful demonstrations, which was relatively mild. Speaking to the Venezuelan government, it "encourages," "calls," "reminds," and "emphasizes," the only condemnation being "all acts of violence and the tragic loss of life," without singling out or condemning the regime (European Parliament, 2014a). The parliament adopted a resolution on December 18 2014 which "[s]trongly condemns the political persecution and repression of the democratic opposition, the violations of freedom of expression and of demonstration, and the existence of media and web censorship" and details other persecutions (European Parliament, 2014b). The Parliament remained relatively focused, adopting the third in thirteen months resolution on Venezuela on March 13 2015 (European Parliament, 2015a). There is a condemnation, a call "on the Venezuelan Government to comply with its own constitution and international obligations," and calls to action for the EU, MS, the HR/VP-EEAS, and regional and international organizations "to make statements and take measures to show solidarity with the Venezuelan people during this difficult period" (Ibid.). The second and third resolutions are notably stronger. But they remain two pieces of non-binding rhetoric which couldn't even secure a firmer EU response from where it counts, the Council, never mind influence reform in Venezuela. And even the Parliament did not sustain this minor momentum. Until 2017, its only other adopted resolution on Venezuela—which maintained the relatively firmer stance—came on June 8 2016 (European Parliament, 2016b).

Despite the Parliament's moderately increased resolve, decisive EU action remained severely limited. On February 24 2015 a Parliamentarian asked Mogherini about the possibility of

the EU taking "a common position," including sanctions, due to the authoritarian acts of the regime (Maura Barandiarán, 2015). Representing the Commission, Mogherini answered, "[t]he EU cannot intervene in the affairs of third countries, however we have repeatedly underlined in statements that it is essential that fundamental rights and freedom of expression are respected," and "the position of the EU is to engage with all sides in Venezuela," including the government (Mogherini, 2015). More than anything, this illustrates where the EU started out, and thus how far it came by 2017 as it began to adopt sanctions and 2019 when it recognized the opposition over the regime.

Three years into Maduro's rule, in 2016—just a year before the novel stance of 2017—as authoritarianism steadily increased and the economy declined, the EU gives clashing signals. On July 18 the Council adopted conclusions on Venezuela (Council of the EU, 2016). They do not criticize the government nor mention a democratic or human rights problem; the primary point is the Council backing a dialogue (with no mention of transition, as there is later on) (Ibid.). In fact, the farthest the Council goes is mentioning "the country's multidimensional challenges" (Ibid.). Though it mentions "jailed opponents who cannot exercise their rights," the Council refers to the country's problems as "economic and social challenges"—that is, not political or humanitarian ones (Ibid.), as it later does. Besides the more activist Parliament, the EU limits its policy toward Maduro's Venezuela to neutral, diplomatic, and non-confrontational language. Here the EU is behaving roughly as could be expected, as shown in the introduction, literature review, and part two (below). Venezuela was not always the outlier for EU foreign policy that it becomes.

While much of the opposition criticized them for legitimizing Maduro and failing to secure real concessions from him ("Inicia el diálogo…," 2016), the Council conclusions backed talks pushed by former Spanish President José Luis Zapata between the opposition and the regime (Lansberg-Rodríguez, 2016; Council of the EU, 2016). This demonstrates that in 2016, the EU abided by its principles of bilateral relations, dialogue, and non-binding rhetoric above speaking explicitly or taking influencing actions to achieve reform against human rights abuse. Unlike since 2017, the EU did not back the positions of the democratic opposition but stayed neutral. It is also noteworthy that it appears nothing was said by François Hollande, Angela Merkel, or Theresa May (the then-leaders of France, Germany, and the UK) on Venezuela in 2016. Spain's then-leader, Mariano Rajoy, did rhetorically confront Maduro during the year (González, 2016). However, as is typical, Spain was too wrapped up in domestic turmoil to shape a different EU response on the issue (Minder, 2016).

At the same time, in August 2016 European Parliament President Martin Schulz, one of the top individual leaders of the EU at the time, stated "democracy is in danger in Venezuela" ("Venezuela democracy under…," 2016). On the one hand, it is notable that the EU's attention was sparse—there is nothing to be found from the Parliament or Council on the October 2016 suspension of the recall effort (see below). The opposition warned this was a watershed moment (Brodzinsky, 2016; García Marco, 2016), and the EU did not respond. On the other hand, the EU had offered explicit concern with the state of Venezuelan democracy already, with a slightly positive trend. Over a decade and a half of growing authoritarianism in Venezuela, the EU did not have a history of giving any exceptional attention or resolve to this human rights issue. In the few years before the Venezuela Crisis emerged, the EU was occasionally interested and firm, especially the Parliament, but otherwise conventionally limited in its interest and rhetoric. The EU's foreign policy toward Venezuela 2013-2016 is similar to its foreign policy toward other human rights issues, as shown in part two; and these are very different from EU foreign policy toward Venezuela since the start of the Crisis in 2017, as shown in parts three and four.

<u>Course of the Venezuela Crisis, 2017-2018</u>

Two political shocks, one in late 2016 and one in early 2017, escalated the discontent naturally rising from the economic crisis and caused the public outburst which erupted in April 2017 and the wider Venezuela Crisis since. First, in October 2016, Maduro's government, after months of failed harassment and extra-legal schemes, illegally dismissed a fulfilled petition process which constitutionally required a presidential recall referendum (Pablo Peñaloza, 2016). Then, in March 2017, the partisan Supreme Court unilaterally dissolved the AN (Watts & Hernández, 2017). The AN was the one institution formally blocking Maduro's regime from total power. With it de jure removed (already its power de facto was overcome), no institution with popular sovereignty remained to check Maduro's abuse of power. A month later, in early May, Maduro created a new Constituent Assembly (ANC), an unconstitutional and un-elected legislature to rubber-stamp Maduro's rule (Long, G. 2017).

The economic and political situation were rapidly becoming a mass social problem due to the severe escalation of the economic crisis and political repression. Mass protests of hundreds of thousands—possibly millions—of Venezuelans erupted in April 2017 and rocked the country through July, and the regime responded with extreme levels of extra-judicial, arbitrary, and one-

sided violence (Fishwick, 2017; "Arremetida contra opositores," 2017; United Nations Human Rights, 2017; Prieto, 2017). During those months, thousands were arrested and wounded and hundreds killed by various state forces, including long-established groups of paramilitary armed party thugs known as colectivos (Torres & Casey, 2017). Eventually, state violence and intransience depleted popular resolve and protests ended by early August (Bendix, 2017). Through the rest of the year, authoritarianism deepened and the humanitarian crisis escalated. On August 19 the ANC stripped the AN of its legislative powers (Graham-Harrison & López, 2017). Widespread political persecution continued ("Arremetida contra opositores," 2017; Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos, 2017, pp. 111-180). The ANC also cracked down on remaining media independence (Gonzales, 2017). Gubernatorial elections were stolen by the ruling party in October (Semple & Vanessa Herrero, 2017). As *The New York Times* reported in November, "[t]hough Mr. Maduro is widely unpopular, he has used the judiciary and other divisions of government to tighten his hold on power, jail prominent critics and demoralize the opposition" (Semple & Krauss, 2017).

After winning 90% of farcical mayoral elections on December 10, Maduro then banned opposition parties from the next elections ("In the name…," 2017). Meanwhile, the economic situation drastically deteriorated (Erickson, 2017). Already store shelves were typically empty, inflation was out of control, and the black market was the only way to secure subsistence amounts of basic foods (Vanessa Herrero & Casey, 2017). By the end of year, a collapse truly took hold. Many children were dying of hunger (Kohut & Herrera, 2017). The hunger rate between 2015-2017 had tripled from 2010-2012, "wiping out the most important advance the country had achieved in the decade since 2000" (FAO et al., 2018, p. 5). 1.5 million Venezuelans had fled to the region by 2018 (UNHCR, 2018a, p. 3). This was the situation of the Venezuela Crisis throughout 2017, when the EU's response began to change from its typical behavior.

2018 was the second year of the Venezuela Crisis. It saw the rapid escalation of the humanitarian crisis. Inside Venezuela there was widespread hunger and preventable medical deaths, and millions of Venezuelan refugees fled across the region. The tragedy inside the country and the growing risk to regional stability across Latin America alarmed the world and the EU.

The authoritarianism of the Maduro regime was sustained and increased during the year. One political event greatly influenced the situation and the EU's response. First, the ANC arbitrability moved up the presidential elections to May, a timing designed to favor Maduro. A

wholly unfree and unfair atmosphere meant Maduro's proclamation of victory was farcical and undemocratic. Politically the year was marked by regime's characteristic oppression such as torture, arbitrary arrest, and suppression of the press ("10 things you…," 2018; "Venezuela: Eventos de…," 2018). Police forces executed thousands of youths living in poverty ("Venezuela: Authorities must…**,"** 2018). Otherwise, the great feature of the 2018 was the escalation of the humanitarian crisis.

Already in 2017 the humanitarian situation was worsening. In 2018 it became a catastrophe. Everyday life became a struggle for survival for most of the population. Inflation topped one million percent ("Venezuela annual inflation…," 2017). There were severe shortages of food (Taladrid, 2019), medicine (Raphelson, 2018), and virtually all basic goods. As the health system collapsed, the reality was even worse than feared (Jones & Pozzebon, 2018).

In 2016, 74% of Venezuelans had lost 17 pounds or more (Meléndez, 2018). The figures for 2017 (Sequera, 2018) are incomprehensibly similar, while there appears to be no data for the surely comparable numbers of 2018 (López Glass, 12 February 2019). Hospitals had virtually no medicine, with nationwide stores short about 85% just by February (Raphelson, 2018). One hospital reported that over one day, "by nightfall, four more newborns had died" (Casey, 2016). Infant and maternal mortality soared (Beaumont, 2019). Blackouts increased (Ocando Alex, 2018), leading to electricity rationing (Polanco & Urrutia, 2018). From these conditions came the refugee crisis.

Researcher Rhoda Howard-Hassman said by May 5,000 people were fleeing a day (Howard-Hassmann, 2018). By November over 3 million had fled (UNHCR, 2018b), and in early 2019 experts estimated over 4 million had fled, with the UN confirming over 4 million had fled in June (UNHCR, 2019). Howard-Hassman found "Venezuelans may already be experiencing famine. At the very least, they are experiencing state-induced hunger" (Howard-Hassmann, 2018). So more than 10% of the population fled—only to be excluded, impoverished, harassed, attacked, and killed in neighboring states (Andreoni, 2018; Parkin Daniels, 2019; Rueda, 2018). Regional stability, especially in Colombia—receiving the greatest number of refugees and barely recovering from its just-ended civil war—was imperiled (Wetherington, 2018; Calamur, 2018b).

Understanding the EU's behavior in 2018 is especially crucial because just a month later, in January 2019, the EU's unprecedentedly decisive and active policy toward Venezuela begins.

Part Two: EU Foreign Policy and Human Rights

For two reasons the Venezuela Crisis was not a prominent issue in Europe before the crisis in 2017. First—for geopolitical and economic reasons—Latin America is generally a relatively lower priority for the EU. Although an economic-based relationship, even "their commercial exchanges are comparatively limited" (Roy, 2012a, p. 237). Besides Spain, no MS has an enduring interest in Latin America, economically or politically. "Spain assumes a de facto leadership role in EU-Latin America policy, for historical, cultural, and economic reasons" (De Lombaerde et al., 2010, p. 232), but this direction has changed and is now limited (because of Spain's domestic weaknesses, its hesitations in expressing influence in the EU, and the development of increased economic and political links between the Latin America and the wider EU). Even Spain's interest is more historic, cultural-social, and geopolitical-ambition based than based on actual political or economic core interests (Malamud, 2006, pp. 2, 5-6). Generally the big three—the UK, France, and Germany —are the only MS who are global actors large enough to have impactful external relations with regions which do not present notable geopolitical risks or economic opportunity for themselves or Europe (Simón, 2017, pp. 66-82; Whitman & Tonra, 2017, pp. 42-44; Kissack, 2017, p. 259). And Latin America fits neither criteria for other MS to be interested.

Given "the low level of objective economic interdependence between the two regions and Europe's priority attention to the enlarged EU," Latin America is not prominently on the EU's radar (De Lombaerde et al., 2010, p. 231). For a continent, Latin America is a relatively small part of the EU's trade, at 6.5% of the EU's exports and 5.9% of its imports in 2014 (Eurostate, 2015a). Aside from economic issues, the EU's other core interest in foreign policy is security and defense—things like terrorism, organized crime, regional instability, or other types of potential domestic threats, in particular in neighboring regions (Longo, 2012, pp. 86-90; Bindi, 2012, pp. 24-27; Junkos, 2017, pp. 115-130; Hillion, 2014, pp. 75-96). However, unlike in supranational economic foreign policy, security policy issues of the CFSP remain largely national and intergovernmental and so limited (Casier, 2012, p. 106). On security issues, Latin America is geopolitically a low priority to this realm of the EU's core interests (Roy, 2012b, p. 13). So, Latin America is not a prime focus of the EU for any of its core interests.

A review of the EU at the 2015 Summit in the Americas, for example, shows that non-economic issues focus on normalizing relations with Cuba, Latin American regional integration, and peace in Colombia—there are no priority security concerns for the EU (Luengo-Cabrera, 2015, pp. 1-4). There are trade agreements and established political dialogues between Latin America and the EU of course. But institutional frameworks do not mean manifestation in the political agenda, especially at the top level of EU policymaking, outside of the specialized lower-level institutions dedicated to the region. A report by the Parliament in July 2017 on the Latin American-EU relationship (exemplifying researchers' analysis of the relationship as primarily defined, especially for the EU, through interregionalism), shows the relationship is limited, and most aspects—especially actionable ones—are economic related, with political considerations mostly about secondary provisions or non-binding dialogues or as development issues, which relate back to the economic relationship (Müller, 2017) (besides the exceptional case of normalizing relations with Cuba) (Müller, et. al., 2017, pp. 45-48, 50-51, 64).

Even MS which could focus on Latin America generally do not. Spain's involvement is limited. Latin America isn't a serious issue at the political level for Spain besides vague rhetorical affirmations (Malamud, 2006, pp. 5-6, 12-13). Besides, Spain lacks the political capital to consistently and meaningfully push a secondary issue in the EU. Largely because of domestic factors, "Madrid punches below its weight in Europe" (Mestres, 2019). Meanwhile, France, Germany, and the UK commit their limited international focus to other regions. Their focus remains on their core issues. France and the UK focus on Africa and the Middle East, for security concerns (Simón, 2017, pp. 67-73), and in a post-9/11 and traditional American alliance-based strategy (Troy Johnston, 2017, pp. 41-56). Most of Germany's meaningful attention focuses almost exclusively on two areas. One priority is continental trade and peace (Simón, 2017, pp. 73-79). The second priority is trade relations with some important external economic partners, like China. Szabo categorizes Germany's foreign policy as "geo-economics," and says that in these relationships "human rights have been downplayed" (Szabo, 2015, p. 143). The rest of the MS are simply too small to overcome their traditional distance from un-essential foreign affairs like Latin America. For example the Czech Republic, actually a mid-range global diplomatic actor in terms of its reach and corps' size compared to the other MS, has only seven embassies in Latin America's 33 countries ("Czech Missions Abroad").

Secondly, the chief issues in play in the Venezuela Crisis specifically—human rights and humanitarian issues—do not involve the EU's core interests. EU trade with Venezuela is relatively inconsequential. Even before the collapse of EU-Venezuela trade by 2018, the levels were low, plummeting to €2.5 billion total trade in goods (European Commission, 2020b, p. 3). In 2013, the year of Maduro's assumption, total trade in goods between the EU and Venezuela was only €7.457 billion, down over €2.5 billion in just one year since 2012 (ibid.). Even the earlier, higher numbers represent a fraction of the EU's total trade with the region. Venezuela was not a leading trading partner for the EU, and it was already trending downward because of domestic Venezuelan factors. Venezuela was not a topic for repeated attention. Nor does Venezuela register in the EU's policymaking for any other core interests. In Venezuela's region, most of the EU's active involvement is limited to bilateral talks and agreements which include non-priority provisions on rule of law (Dominguez, 2015, pp.56, 73-74), trade agreements and negotiations (generally with regional blocs, especially MERCOSUR) (Roy, 2012a, pp. 238-241), and the peace process in Colombia (De Lombaerde et al., 2010, pp. 226, 229-235; Dominguez, 2015, pp. 105-109). Essentially Venezuela is only relevant to the EU altruistically, as a humanitarian and democratization crisis. For a while it remained peripheral. Especially before the threat of national and regional instability since 2017, Venezuela was only a human rights concern for the EU; one of many authoritarian states and economic crises in the world.

Venezuela unsurprisingly did not receive sustained attention from the EU before 2017; the EU is not active in every global human rights issue. This is reflected in the foreign policies of MS outside of the big three (and even these, as discussed, are not focused on Latin American issues). Consider Austria, a representative small-to-mid-size power in the EU. While Austria "has always been a keen promoter of human rights" among MS, this refers to work on issues like landmine conventions and child labor laws, not issues which would involve sacrifice or exertion such as sanctioning authoritarian regimes or pushing for other kinds of stronger stances or more active responses (Pomorska, 2017, p. 57). Austria has only pushed for interventionist policies for peace or human rights in the case of the Balkans and for EU enlargement—i.e. in the EU's neighborhood—and most of its work on human rights are limited to the greater European region (Phinnemore, 2000, pp. 217-219). This demonstrates that its field of play is limited, corresponding to its size and influence. Regarding MS' typical foreign policies toward geopolitically distant human rights issues, this is representative. Evaluating EU foreign policy and human rights over its

entire history to 1992, political scientist professor Kathryn Sikkink finds that when it comes to human rights in foreign policy, "European policies focused on Europe" (Sikkink, 1993, p. 169).

Problems which concern non-core interests of the EU like human-rights issues do not always get much attention. They often do not become an EU priority if they either: occur in or are perpetrated by states which are economically, demographically, or geopolitically small and distant countries to the EU, or if the perpetrating state is a valued partner which the EU is reluctant to antagonize. Brief overviews of examples demonstrate these general patterns. Lack of attention is especially manifested through the first years of atrocity or tragedy. This is another explanation for the sharpening of the EU's stance toward Maduro: as time passes, if the intensity of the crisis is sustained or increased, EU interest may grow and resolve may stiffen. After years of crisis, on one hand Venezuela is not a partner of for the EU, so it may be confronted, but it is also a geopolitically distant country, so it might be neglected.

Regarding the first scenario, states which are not highly relevant to the EU committing serious and systemic human rights abuse, consider Myanmar's government's genocide against its Rohingya minority beginning in August 2017. Violence against the ethnic minority's entire civilian population by the state's army erupted rapidly in August 2017. Within a month, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein declared it was "a textbook example of ethnic cleansing" (Al Hussein, 2017.) In August 2018 UN investigators called for Myanmar military leaders to face charges of genocide (UN News, 2018). The EU's response was limited, especially at first. For example, the Parliament adopted its first resolution on the issue in December 2016; the resolution "[u]rge[ed] the military and security forces to stop immediately the killings, harassment and rapes of the Rohingya people, and the burning of their homes," but at no point condemns the government, and its "calls" to the EU are limited to things like "continu[ing] the regular bilateral human rights dialogue," "continu[ing] their support of the new democratic structures of Myanmar," and "for the EU to support the UNHCR in its efforts to help Rohingya refugees" (European Parliament, 2016c). Additionally, its extensive "calls," "urges," and "requests" directed at Myanmar's government convey a high level of legitimacy, caution, and neutrality (Ibid.). This is hardly a forceful response to ethnic cleansing. But time can make a difference. Since then, it appears the Parliament has adopted seven resolutions on the issue (European Parliament, 2019d). This is a relatively high number. But this issue is also one of the worst human rights atrocities in the contemporary world, and still concrete or influential actions

from the EU remain limited. The rhetoric has become stronger—for example, the September 13 2018 resolution repeatedly condemns the government (European Parliament, 2018f). (Interestingly, it is hardly more direct and critical than the language used at the same time against Maduro: an authoritarian government received a similar response as a genocidal one.) The Council adopted targeted sanctions (and renewed a previous arms embargo) on April 26 2018 (Council of the EU, 2018c). Meanwhile, the EEAS has maintained a bilateral human rights dialogue with Myanmar (EEAS, 2019a), which is non-binding and not decisively influential. This is also notable because the EU did not break off bilateral relations with the government. Finally, so far the Commission has given over €150 million for humanitarian aid toward the Rohingya Crisis (European Commission, 2020a). But those funds keeps people alive, they do not achieve or press for reform.

The EU's response to the Rohingya Crisis is in some ways parallel to its response to the Venezuela Crisis, but the difference is one is a case of supreme violence and one a case of common authoritarianism and intense humanitarian breakdown. Below it is considered how the EU responds to less severe human rights crises. This example shows the EU's influence is limited in distant areas. Firm rhetoric, aid, and sanctions are about the limit, unless the EU rallies or joins an influential intentional coalition. On Myanmar it did not, and on Venezuela it does.

Demonstrating the EU's response to political issues in geopolitically peripheral Latin America, De Lombaerde et al. evaluate the impact the EU's policies conflict management had during the height of the Colombian Civil War in the 1990s and early 2000s. They say "[c]oncrete examples of intervention in Andean conflicts are almost nonexistent," illustrating the EU's history in the region before the Venezuela Crisis (De Lombaerde et al., 2010, pp. 226, 229-235; Dominguez, 2015, p. 229). Echoing how Dominguez and Santander say the EU sees Latin America as relatively unimportant to its self-interest, De Lombaerde et al. go further and say the same is true for Latin America, that "neither of the regions is a priority for the other" (Ibid., p. 231). In this case the EU's response included Commission funding, MS funding NGOs, and funding or projects from the Parliament and the Council (Ibid., p. 232). Like in the case of the Rohingya Crisis, the EU can contribute to solutions, but its actions do not truly contribute to solving a big problem in a distant land.

The authors have a few conclusions particularly relevant to the present study. They note NGOs play a big role in the EU's response—in both carrying out projects and lobbying (Ibid., pp.

233-234). NGOs potential influence on the EU's foreign policy can help explain the present research question: media, the Venezuelan opposition, and human rights organizations were increasingly outspoken about Maduro's regime and the humanitarian crisis from 2017, and perhaps this contributes to the EU's heightened attention and resolve, as in this case. The authors also find MS often acted alone (Ibid., p. 237). This contrasts to MS' responses to the Venezuela Crisis. Scholars almost universally agree that the effectiveness of the EU's foreign policy is heavily determined by the will of MS to relinquish competences and act supranationally. As foreign policy researcher Jana Puglierin says, ""[t]he reasons that have so far prevented a proactive and coherent European foreign policy are connected to the nature of foreign policy as a core element of national identity and sovereignty" (Puglierin, 2019, p. 2).

Lack of division in MS' opinion must have contributed to the strength of the EU's response to the Venezuela Crisis. Finally, the authors concluded the EU's effectiveness was severely limited, and this is a function of limited MS coordination (De Lombaerde et al., 2010, pp. 241-242). The authors demonstrate the scholarly consensus—even within the limits of its capabilities, the EU has underperformed, and what can change this is political unity and will. In the present study then, a successful, active, or effective EU response must overcome these challenges that, until this point, the EU often does not.

Xinjiang demonstrates the second obstacle, offending states who are valued partners. Reports of the mass internment in concentration camps of millions of Uyghurs emerged in late 2017 (Long, Q., 2017), but only were reported more broadly in spring 2018 (Phillips, 2018). In September 2018, only a small and mild notice was included in the Parliament's extensive resolution on the "State of EU-China relations," as the Parliament "urges the Chinese authorities to free those reportedly detained for their beliefs or cultural practices and identities" (European Parliament, 2018e). A month later a resolution on the "[m]ass arbitrary detention of Uyghurs and Kazakhs" was adopted, and the resolution's strength is similar to the first resolution on the Rohingya crisis (European Parliament, 2018g). EU attention has been limited. The Parliament appears to have adopted four relevant resolutions (European Parliament, 2019e). Merkel, for example, has been loudly silent—for the sake of business interests (Rahn, 2019). While on a visit to China and meeting its leader in September 2019, almost two years into the crisis, "[n]ot once did she utter the word 'Xinjiang'" (Ibid.). Meanwhile, as parts three and four will show, a core of

Latin American-EU relations, including meetings between heads of states, will be on human rights and Venezuela.

Saudi Arabia is another authoritarian state who is a partner on core interests—more security than economic, though it is also an economic partner because of its oil production. Since 2015 Saudi Arabia has waged a brutal air campaign in Yemen which has killed tens of thousands of civilians and imposed a blockade which has ignited famine. The EU is generally less permissive of Saudi abuses than America, yet it was years before the EU began to sharply condemn Saudi Arabia. An initial resolution on July 9 2015 did not condemn Saudi Arabia (European Parliament, 2015b). Almost a year into the war, in February 2016 the Parliament "[c]all[ed] on the VP/HR to launch an initiative aimed at imposing an EU arms embargo against Saudi Arabia, given the serious allegations of breaches of international humanitarian law by Saudi Arabia in Yemen" (European Parliament, 2016a). Two years into the war, Council conclusions vaguely said "[t]here can be no military solution to the conflict in Yemen," and "[t]he EU strongly condemns attacks against civilians and renews its urgent call on all parties to the conflict to ensure the protection of civilians and to respect international humanitarian law and international human rights law," but does not mention the government of Saudi Arabia once, let alone clearly condemn it (Council of the EU, 2017a). This issue does not have the salience and volume in the EU's top institutions that Venezuela does since 2017. When there are declarations on this crisis the EU maintains a much more neutral stance than toward Maduro. A parliamentary resolution in November 2017 does say "dozens of Saudi-led airstrikes have been blamed for indiscriminately killing and wounding civilians in violation of the laws of war," and reiterates its call for an EU arms embargo on Saudi Arabia (European Parliament, 2017g). But years later a clear call from the Parliament has still failed to materialize into simple but meaningful supranational action. The EU has not stopped MS from selling weapons to Saudi Arabia which have been used for these attacks in Yemen. In fact, showing both the inconsistency of even powerful MS on human rights, and the limited ability of the EU to exert itself on such causes, French weapons sales to Saudi Arabia have continued to climb (McCarthy, 2020).

These four examples of the EU's long-term response to grave and years-long human rights crises demonstrate the EU's characteristic behavior. Balfour finds "the sum of activities and reactions that the EU has displayed with regard to human rights and democracy does not add up to a foreign policy" that realizes its principles (Balfour, 2012, p. 137). Generally democracy and

human rights are secondary concerns in EU foreign policy, and when they are prominent in the policy toward a foreign issue, the EU's action remains limited. This clearly echoes the findings of researchers in the literature review.

These examples demonstrate the limits of the assertiveness or effectiveness of EU foreign policy. Aside from effects, even its attempts are typically modest. Also demonstrated in these examples is the conclusion reached by foreign policy researchers Federiga Bindi and Irina Angelescu: the EU even struggles to form a consensus on what its foreign policy goals are (Bindi & Angelescu, 2012, p. 327). MS disagreement may mean nothing is produced, or any rhetoric or policy is adopted is generic, or that different messages come from different parts of the EU. "The most important determinant of all is political will," and disagreements in the EU are plentiful, affecting the strength of its foreign policy, especially on non-core issues (Marsh & Mackenstein, 2005, p. 262). As shown in these examples, the Parliament and the Council may be speaking very differently, if they are speaking at all. Another novelty of the EU's behavior toward Venezuela is that the Council, the Commission, and the Parliament were all vocal, active, and in agreement in their response to the Venezuela Crisis since 2017; both MS dissention and differences between the mentalities and processes of the three key supranational institutions were overcome.

Venezuela is not a valued partner, so the EU would be less cautious, unlike in the cases of Saudi Arabia or China. However, Venezuela does not affect any of the EU's core interests, which means instead of deliberately treating the issue lightly, its effort simply may be limited, as in the case of Myanmar or Colombia. This is part of the environment and mentality the EU has as the Venezuela Crisis emerges in 2017 and the EU forms its response.

In addition to these factors, before 2017 Venezuela was a case of political authoritarianism and economic shortage, not something more cataclysmic (and headline-grabbing) like genocide, war, mass internment, or war crimes as above. Venezuela was not particularly unique or compelling in the competition for relevance. Many equivalent—and worse—humanitarian and human rights issues around the world contended for the EU's finite attention and ability. During this time, similar levels of authoritarianism and/or economic breakdown in Zimbabwe, Congo, Nicaragua, and Cuba for example, rivaled the seriousness of Venezuela's problems.

For example, in the case of Zimbabwe, in February 2019, a year and a half into its troubled transition, the Parliament adopted a text strongly faulting the new government's sustained human rights abuses (European Parliament, 2019b). On one hand, this is similar to the strong statements

on Maduro's regime in 2017. On the other, it is one of notably fewer acts from the top EU institutions, it took a while to get to that point of denunciation, and the resolution is not accompanied by sustained interest, significant funding, or—especially—clear support for the democratic opposition, as in the case of Venezuela. (There are, however, sanctions (Reality Check team, 2019).) This demonstrates that it is not expected that the Venezuela Crisis would receive outstanding attention and bold action from the EU. The response the Venezuela Crisis received is not the default.

Cases of authoritarianism and economic recession, absent catastrophic levels of violence or collapses in standards-of-living, usually do not receive uniquely intense and sustained interest and effort. The EU is limited as a foreign policy organization, especially in fields of non-core interests, and there are many such issues in the world. In 2017 an acute humanitarian crisis emerged in Venezuela, and it began to endanger the region ("Venezuela: Humanitarian Crisis…," 2017). This roughly coincides with the EU's increased attention and will to act in its response. This is important because rather than political human rights crises, humanitarian crises (especially those which are particularly intense, massive, or regionally destabilizing) are typically a global issue which provoke a more active policy response from the EU. Then-EU Commissioner Kristalina Georgieva says "over the years Europe has become a major player in responding to disasters" all over the world (Georgieva, 2014, p. 14) and "humanitarian aid and disaster response are no longer 'niche' areas of EU activity" (Ibid., p. 19). This contrasts with the documented limitations of the EU response to human rights and democracy issues. So, this is likely another part of the explanation of the EU's increased commitment.

When the EU is involved in political issues in geopolitically distant regions, usually its response is not decisive and the EU is not by itself highly influential.

Along with the introduction and literature review sections, part two of the analysis has examined the background of the EU's foreign policy in situations similar or relevant to the Venezuela Crisis. First, we see that Latin America in general is not a relative priority for the EU. Venezuela in particular was not in the forefront of EU global thinking and policymaking before 2017. Even after 2017, some of the issues in play regarding Venezuela are not areas to which the EU usually responds vigorously. Once Venezuela's problems became a crisis—rapidly escalating humanitarian disaster and authoritarianism—this still does not necessarily mean the EU would respond firmly. In similar cases of outstanding human rights abuse, the EU's response may be

muted if the offending state is a partner in core-interests (as in the cases of China or Saudi Arabia) or if the offending state is simply distant from the EU and out of its reach diplomatically and geopolitically (as in the case off Myanmar or Colombia). Scholars repeatedly find that the EU is not usually a strong actor on human rights. Finally, especially before 2017, Venezuela's human rights problem was not unique in its severity (it roughly compares to Zimbabwe). Few of these many cases at any one time get a robust response from the EU. This section has reviewed how the EU typically responds to cases like Venezuela's. This demonstrates what could be expected, and illustrates why this study is needed, because the EU's response to the Venezuela Crisis has been far different. It is an anomaly, and this can offer lessons the EU's unrealized potential.

Part Three: EU Foreign Policy in response to the Venezuela Crisis in 2017

Its actions from January 2019 on show that in this case the EU broke the typical patterns of its foreign policy. As stated, after evaluating EU foreign policy and human rights more broadly, this paper will examine the EU's response to the first two years of the Venezuela Crisis, to compare it to what could be expected, and to track and better understand the EU's journey to its extraordinary actions since early 2019.

Until 2017, even as Venezuela began to stir and the source of the Crisis emerged in late 2016, the EU's foreign policy toward Venezuela was roughly what could be expected: minimal attention and limited resolve. Things seemed to change in early 2017.

Even before the escalation of the political crisis in the spring (with mass protests, regime violence, and the ANC), the EU's interest was notably higher and it was already starting to be much more active on Venezuela. Already in March, before the protests had erupted, an EEAS spokesperson released an official statement "recall[ing] that full respect of the Constitution, democratic principles, rule of law and separation of powers is crucial for the country to achieve a peaceful outcome to the current difficult situation and to regain political stability" (EEAS, 2017a). This was in response to the Maduro government revoking parliamentary immunity and limiting the rights of the AN. This statement is a bit stronger and more direct than previous statements from the EEAS and HR/VP. After all, the statement called for "full respect of the human right and fundamental freedoms" (Ibid.), which it would not do if the EU was not interested enough and able

to muster the internal unity necessary for such non-tranquil language against a sovereign government.

After the protests began in April, immediately met by regime violence, the EU was much more focused on Venezuela. The EU showed interest relatively quickly, seeming to emerge from its usual torpor. On April 27, the Parliament "[c]ondemn[ed] the continued unconstitutional violation of the democratic order in Venezuela," "[e]xpresse[d] grave concern at the seriously deteriorating situation as regards democracy, human rights and the socio-economic situation in Venezuela," and called for dialogue and preparation for a possible humanitarian crisis (European Parliament, 2017b). Still denying to identify or condemn the regime explicitly, neither is this is the typically balanced and neutral statement.

In May, a month into the protests and violent repression, the Council released its "Council conclusion on Venezuela" (Council of the EU, 2017b). This was a rapid response—compared to months or years for other (and more severe) crises. Again there was no direct condemnation of the Maduro regime, besides a reminder that its use of military courts to imprison civilian protestors "goes against international law" (Ibid.). In a way this is cautious, as the Council's most direct condemnation is reserved for a niche component of the regime's apparatus of repression. Yet there is a clear preoccupation about human-rights throughout the document. Violence is condemned multiple times, though responsibility remains unassigned. Dialogue is strongly called for. Meanwhile, the conclusions declare "the fundamental rights of the Venezuelan people must be respected," indirectly but clearly saying they currently are not (Ibid.). From the Council, with the high threshold of unanimity and the perpetual clashing of various MS' viewpoints, this document is surprisingly strong on human-rights. The difference with Council language on Venezuela in 2016 is notable.

About a week later, the EEAS spokesperson followed with another statement. Though it did not condemn, it noted "violence" and called for "the integrity of the democratic institutions" (EEAS, 2017b). The Commission appears more restrained than the Council or the Parliament. All three institutions, however, so far carefully avoided taking a direct stance against the Maduro regime. The EU spoke for human rights, but it avoided taking a side. But repeatedly, in various ways, it implicitly condemned the government and called for the protection of democracy and human-rights. There was a contradiction between the clear concern for human-rights and an

insistence on remaining officially neutral between supporting the opposition or the regime. This is what is seen in the EU response during the popular protests and state violence through the summer.

In mid-July, while Spain was suggesting sanctions if Maduro's behavior continued, HR/VP Mogherini again resisted such an approach (Schultz, 2017). In some ways the EU was unusually stirred by the Venezuela Crisis, while at the same time it so far was not willing to respond firmly, especially when it comes to options beyond rhetoric, such as sanctions or aid. The journey from typical behavior to 2019 is demonstrated in the EU's partly unique, partly normal response through the first half of 2017.

Interestingly, in late April a resolution was introduced in the European Parliament by the leftist GUE/NGL Group condemning OEA General Secretary Luis Almagro's condemnation of the Maduro regime, backing of the opposition, and call for human-rights. The proposed resolution fiercely defended—and even praised—the Venezuelan government, attacked the OEA, and opposed humanitarian and democratic concerns: the resolution "[d]enounces the spurious 'instrumentalisation' of human rights for political ends by the EU, in particular in the case of Venezuela," "[d]enounces the accusations about an 'alleged humanitarian crisis' in Venezuela, which are intended to increase external interference and bolster a campaign in favour of intervention in the country," and labels such actions "external interference" (Couso Permuy, et al., 2017). This bitterly anti-human-rights proposal demonstrates some of the attitudes which were present in European society. This may help explain the neutral and softer policy seen during the first half of 2017: not necessarily because these people themselves were numerically significant, but a group with such a strong position is demonstrative of a wider spectrum of others who are less fanatic though still hesitant to move to support a firmer stance. The resolution was not adopted, but it demonstrates a component of the EU politics and public opinion at play on the issue. The EU had to overcome certain attitudes and internal divisions, or at least weaken them, to get to the point where it was moving beyond its usual responses.

Later in the summer things began to change sharply. Somehow internal hesitations or divisions had become further surpassed. Months after the start of the Crisis, a far clearer response emerged from the EU. It seems three factors determined this. First, it took time. The delayed shift may express internal trepidation or dissent during the start of the crisis. Given the difference between the first and second halves of the year, it suggests that it took time to come to the explicitly anti-Maduro, pro-human-rights position the EU has taken since. Cases in part two showed time

helps (though usually years, not months). Second, the political crisis escalated in Venezuela: state violence, a rising death toll and arrests, and the ANC power grab. Third, the humanitarian situation was rapidly deteriorating; and this decade the EU has more decisively responded to humanitarian crises (Georgieva, 2014, pp. 14-19). Maybe the EU revised its opinion due to the increasing severity of the Crisis, or took time to reach consensus internally. It seems both these processes converged to pull the EU to its distinctive response beginning in summer of 2017.

In the July 2017 report on EU-Latin American relations the Parliament warned of a "current democratic crisis" in Venezuela and called for dialogue between the government and opposition (Müller et. al., 2017, pp. 63, 67). The report's language on Venezuela is newly lucid of reality, such as when it says authoritarians features "seem to have prevailed" from the previously hybrid regime (Ibid., p. 15).

On July 31st an EEAS spokesperson issued a lengthier statement declaring recent events had "reinforced the European Union's preoccupation for the fate of democracy in Venezuela" (EEAS, 2017c). Contradiction still remains. The statement says "[a]ll sides must refrain from violence" (Ibid.), even though violence overwhelmingly came from the government. But the statement also says, "[t]he European Union condemns the excessive and disproportionate use of force by security forces" (Ibid.). The EU appears cautious to abandon an increasingly strained neutrality, but it is clearly growing more displeased with the regime.

From the EEAS this is relatively explicit language. A pair of declarations by Mogherini on July 26 and August 2, responding to the illegitimate and farcical election of the ANC, matches it. In the first, Mogherini indirectly condemns the regime by mentioning "human rights violations, excessive use of force, massive detentions," and she calls the AN "the legitimate legislative body" (Council of the EU, 2017c). Though not directly contradicting the regime's claims about legal authority, this language shows a pivotal willingness to back the opposition and oppose the regime's arbitrary measures. It also calls for dialogue (Ibid.). The second statement, noting the dubious creation and election of the ANC, says "[t]he European Union and its Member States therefore cannot recognise the Constituent Assembly" (Council of the EU, 2017d). For the first time, the EU began to stop deferring to the Maduro regime's claims of sovereign legitimacy in the country. Reiterating calls for talks, it says the EU and MS "also welcome and encourage the offers of countries in the region and other international actors to accompany and facilitate such negotiations" (Ibid.), taking the step of acknowledging the importance of regional partners in

reaching a solution. These statements represent a concretely tougher EU position; the political use of recognition of sovereign bodies in defiance of the de jure government is an assertive step. Serious internal resolve is the only way this is possible from a supranational organization favorable to bilateralism and usually frayed by divisions.

Venezuelan opposition leaders Julio Borges and Freddy Guevara toured the EU in early September, and high level EU and MS officials received them. Notably, Merkel did, took a strong position on the situation, and was seen to have "backed" the opposition ("Angela Merkel backs…," 2017). Borges and Guevara met similar success with another influential figure, Macron. Hours after meeting with Borges and Guevara, Macron said he may push for EU sanctions (Associated Press, 2017). These are decisive actions which herald a shift in the EU—a willingness to go beyond statements, even more direct ones, to take or consider atypical and influential action like sanctions and unrecognizing the government. It appears the escalated authoritarianism of and humanitarian crisis caused by Maduro in 2017 was having an effect. July to September show the EU steadily drifting away from bilateralism and neutrality.

September also marked the beginning of the first round of dialogue since the ANC and the democratic crisis. Held in the Dominican Republic, the process was EU-backed but Latin American-led (Pineda & Cawthorne, 2017). Followings its inclinations, the EU had repeatedly emphasized the needs for dialogue during 2017. Months later, for example, after unfruitful talks, Italy repeated its support for dialogue, with another round of talks scheduled to begin in mid-December (Alfano, 2017). Increasingly uncharacteristic behavior—politicizing recognition, focusing on human rights, condemning state abuse directly—coexisted with some typical behavior, such as its preference for negotiated solutions.

At its political conference in early September the EPP adopted a resolution on the "democratic crisis in Venezuela." The document emphasized human-rights and called for EU sanctions (European People's Party, 2017). This of course could be because of an ideological opposition—even democratic, non-authoritarian conservatives typically prioritize human-rights in definably leftist regimes. Nevertheless, this is a significant stance from one of the EU's mainstream political actors.

On September 13 the Parliament successfully passed a resolution calling for targeted asset freezes (European Parliament, 2017d). The resolution also recognized the AN and affirmed that the Parliament and EU do not recognize the ANC (European Parliament, 2017c). A call for asset

freezes “for all those involved in the serious violations of human rights in Venezuela” (Ibid.) is a major step for the EU. This represents a significant hardening of the EU’s, or at least the Parliament’s, attitude. The Parliament also said in the resolution that it “fully supports the ICC investigations into the extensive crimes and acts of repression perpetrated by the Venezuelan regime” (Ibid.). Concrete and coercive action like this from the EU is uncommon and notable. Now the Parliament was pushing for actions which were not non-binding. Calls for sanctions and the politicization of recognition from Parliament are decisive new policies.

(Significantly, this call came from a resolution on Latin American-EU relations (Ibid.). This is another positive sign: the Parliament “[u]nderline[d] that the EU-LAC bi-regional partnership is based on common principles, values and interests such as democracy, human rights, peace and solidarity, the rule of law and an independent judiciary,” and expressed its commitment to relations to build the trade relationship and promote these values (Ibid.).)

Just a few weeks after the fraudulent victory of the ruling part in gubernatorial elections, on October 26, to be awarded on December 13, the Parliament dramatically escalated its backing of the opposition by awarding its prestigious Sakharov Prize to the Venezuelan democratic opposition (European Parliament, 2017h). Parliament President Antonio Tajani said,

> “’By awarding the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought to Democratic Opposition in Venezuela, we are reaffirming our unwavering support to the democratically-elected national assembly of Venezuela. We are also calling for the peaceful transition to democracy that the Venezuelan people are desperately calling for’” (European Parliament, 2017f).

This act, as the language shows, displays a few things: the EU’s opposition to Maduro, the EU’s support for the opposition, and the EU’s insistence on a transition. The new language of “transition”—indirectly calling for a new post-Maduro government—is a moderate but significant escalation of the language of “free and transparent electoral processes” and “measures to constructively promote the political stabilisation of the country” from the 13 September resolution (European Parliament, 2017c), and demonstrates the rate of change in the Parliament’s position. This is a confrontational, non-bilateral approach which is sharply distinct from the typical non-binding and vague critiques and inconsequential actions the EU responds with to most states which systematically violate human rights. Increasingly, the EU is abandoning the typically deferential bilateral for this novel political and partial, universal values-based, approach toward Venezuela.

On November 13 the Council adopted an arms embargo and targeted sanctions (Council of the EU, 2017e). Compare this to the Saudi Arabia and the Yemen War: years into the murder of tens of thousands of civilians, the EU has not done what it did in a few months in response to hundreds of murders by the Maduro regime (surely the lack of sacrifice required for this embargo compared to a Saudi one plays a role). The conclusions with the announcement are clear: "The EU calls upon the government to urgently restore democratic legitimacy," and calls for dialogue and transition (Ibid.). As the Italian Minister said in December, "[o]ur only aim [in adopting the sanctions] is to encourage a substantial dialogue through gestures capable of creating a climate of confidence" (Alfano, 2017). The EU was showing it was committed to go further to achieve change. Demonstrating this concern, the Parliament released a detailed briefing in December displaying its concern for human rights, democracy, and humanitarian issues in the country (Gómez Ramírez, December 2017, pp. 8, 9, 11).

Uncharacteristically, the EU was taking real action and displayed a strong stance for human-rights. The EU continued to call for dialogue, enacting sanctions only to facilitate successful talks. Significantly, in addition to sanctions the EU was also politicizing its recognition rather than accepting the Maduro's arbitrary power grabs, and it was calling for a "transition" rather than more characteristic calls for a "solution." The volume of declarations and resolutions on Venezuela was high in 2017, and the forcefulness of the rhetoric about human rights abuse was increasingly direct. Maduro's abuses forced the EU to choose between standing firmly for human rights and remaining typically bilateral and diplomatic, and it chose the former. After a year of intense political conflict, human rights abuse, humanitarian emergency, the EU's response was distinct from its normal behavior of objectivity and passivity. After a few broader notes to complete this subsection on 2017, the EU's policy very early in 2018, relevant to its actions in December, is covered at the start of part four.

Certain political realities were influencing the EU's response to the Venezuela Crisis. First, there is the global situation. Russia and China gave Maduro's regime economic lifelines ("Venezuela gets support…," 2017). With thousands of intelligence and secret police forces in the country directing Maduro's surveillance and repression apparatus, Cuba instrumentally propped up the regime militarily and politically (Naim, 2017; Berwick, 2019; O'Grady, 2017). Confronting Maduro meant the EU was opposing adversaries it is generally keen to not antagonize, especially

in geopolitically distant regions or over issues of non-core interests, such as with China in Africa (Wissenbach, 2009, pp. 663, 665, 669-671). For example, in 2017 Greece vetoed an EU resolution at the UN condemning China on human rights (Smith, 18 June 2017). Secondly, there is the Trump effect. Instability, backstabbing, a disinterest in human rights, and support—rhetorical and real—for authoritarianism were repeatedly coming from America and its president (Montana, 2017; Milman & Smith & Carrington., 2017; Baker, 2017). This turn meant the EU was increasingly on its own in defending a liberal world order (Lehne & Grabbe, 2017; "How Trump, Putin…," 2017), and at least for now unable to maintain a liberal world order on its own (Youngs, 2018; Haass, R., 2017). And Trump also increased the strength of populism and nationalism in Europe (Pazzanese, 2017). Domestically, in 2017 the EU was still wracked by populism (Erlanger, 2017). Many leaders increasingly choose not to defend human rights in times of populism (Roth, 2017). Not just Eurosceptics, but even non-populists simply oppose increased competences from MS to the EU on foreign policy and consistently resist stronger responses. Finally, there is Brexit. After reeling from the shock after the Brexit vote in 2016 (Lane, 2016), in 2017 the EU had to overcome at least temporary weakness caused by Brexit (Campos et. al., November 2016, pp. 35-37, 47-49, 75) and conduct extensive Brexit negotiations: in 2017 alone it was six months of "daily dramas" ("Brexit: EU leaders…," 2017). This took a lot of the EU's time and energy. These four factors—global authoritarianism, Trump, EU populism, and Brexit—were not conducive for the EU to play the role of defender of human rights in Venezuela. These factors can explain some shortfalls, and also make what the EU did end up doing even more remarkable. Doing what it did in this political environment showed something had shifted. From this point of view then, 2019 is less surprising and is clearly part of a progression.

The EU somewhat failed to utilize potential partnerships. For example, in August MERCOSUR, a regional trade bloc, expelled Venezuela (Hermida, 2017). The EU was continuing decades-old negotiations on a trade deal with MERCOSUR at the time ("What's your beef?...," 2017), and it seems it released no public comment on this development (besides a brief and objective discussion of MERCOSUR and Venezuela, before this happened, as part of a larger report on the region (Müller et. al., 2017, pp. 27-28)). The Parliament adopted a resolution on Latin America relations in September (European Parliament, 2017c), following its Committee on Foreign Affairs' report in July (Müller et. al., 2017). The September resolution supports various elements of the active, institutional, and bilateral interregional relationship—and calls for closer

ties in some ways—but fails to lay out a path forward for closer cooperation on the intensifying Venezuela Crisis (European Parliament, 2017c). Given the activity on this issue and the general regional strength of the Grupo de Lima and the OEA, this represents a missed opportunity. Overall the report reveals an aspirational and actually growing, yet still limited interregional relationship.

Supporting the precarious Colombian peace process, the normalization of ties with Cuba, and developing interregional trade relations at the time, the EU proved to be unprepared to seriously deepen ties on other political issues, such as the Venezuela Crisis. On the other hand, the June 8 2016—the year before the hardening of the EU's stance in 2017—resolution already "[u]rges the VP/HR to cooperate with Latin American countries and regional and international organizations" (European Parliament, 2016b). There were some intentions at least, though efforts were not nearly exhaustive. Through both phases of the EU's response in 2017, its policy was not, at least publicly, coordinated with North or Latin American partners. In a way, the EU followed with delay the Pan-American responses. For example, the EU's sanctions came months after similar American and Canadian actions (Government of Canada, 2017a; "US slaps sanctions…," 2017). The relative weakness and unimportance of Latin American relations for the EU was revealed by the fact that there appears to be no EU cooperation with the OEA or the Grupo de Lima, beyond minor funding for an OEA report on human rights in the continent, which included describing some of the Maduro regime's abuses (Eguigiren Praeli et. al., 2017, p. 18). There appears to be one act of Latin American-EU cooperation on the issue: following the Grupo de Lima's request (Government of Canada, 2017b), the EU agreed to postpone the scheduled CELAC-EU summit scheduled for October 2017 (European Parliament, 2017e). A joint statement of the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly on September 21 2017 acknowledged the Parliament's and various Latin American Congresses' resolutions on Venezuela and expressed "our solidarity with the Venezuelan nation," but the resolution goes no further on diplomacy or action on the Venezuela Crisis (Asamblea Parlamentaria Euro-Latinoamericana, 2017). This is the kind of action which the EU could conduct more frequently to maximize its influence even within current constraints.

Similarly, it appears there was no real US-EU coordination, at least publicly. Even once the EU began to imposed sanctions, condemn the regime, and focus on human-rights, it was not coordinated with and frequently was even different than the American response. Failing to coordinate or work together with America is another missed opportunity. However, given the

Trump presidency, this may be a wise decision or out of the EU's hands. Similarly, it appears the EU did not raise or support responses to the Crisis at the UN either.

To summarize, the EU's foreign policy toward the Venezuela Crisis in 2017 is complicated. For one thing, there is a defining shift. The EU enters 2017 treating the Crisis as it does similar cases. But early in 2017 the EU voices stronger rhetoric, and after a few months adopts what is for the EU an exceptional resolve and strong stance. Significantly, in 2017 it begins to use recognition as a policy tool for human rights. By the end of 2017 the EU was adopting sanctions. During the whole year the EU did not take up the issue with potential international partners, particularly the US, Latin America, and the UN, and this represents an unnecessary failure. Overall, the EU clearly abandoned its deference to cooperation and compromise and took a stand for human rights. In response to Maduro's arbitrary power and brutal rule, the EU was able to be flexible, abandoning its impulse for do adopt policies more effective in pushing for progress. A challenging environment limited what the EU did, but makes what it achieved even more commendable.

The EU went far beyond what should be expected of it. From this it seems clear that the distinctiveness of its actions in 2019 is not out of nowhere, but comes from a process beginning two years before of unusually high interest, commitment, and resolve for the cause of human rights in Venezuela.

Part Four: EU Foreign Policy in response to the Venezuela Crisis in 2018

By the end of 2018 over 3 million Venezuelan refugees had fled the country (UNHCR, 2018b). Almost all of them went to Latin American countries (Grandi, 2018; UNICEF, 2018, pp. 1-2), with nearly 1.5 million in Colombia alone (Baddour, 2019). Meanwhile, Maduro's authoritarianism and the economic breakdown in Venezuela continued. As a result there was a decrease in regional stability, with risks of greater chaos (Otis, 2018; Londoño, 2020). The EU's response reflects these two trends: continued work on human rights and an increasing worry about the humanitarian disaster. If 2017 was unusual but not entirely unprecedented, 2018 covers the gap between that response and the EU's fully novel policies toward Venezuela in 2019.

In January and early February there were talks between the regime and the opposition in the Dominican Republic. Even as the regime seemed to meet the EU's call for dialogue, the EU's

did not prematurely soften its position. For example, on 22 January the Council sanctioned an additional 7 regime officials, because "[t]hese individuals are involved in the non-respect of democratic principles or the rule of law as well as in the violation of human rights" (Council of the EU, 2018a). The Council's language here is notably explicit.

Also in January Spain and Venezuela expelled each other's ambassadors; Venezuela did so first after accusing Spain of being behind the Council's sanctions (AFP, 2020). For over fifteen years Spain and Venezuela had periodically experienced diplomatic conflict. This January was a dramatic escalation and demonstrated the height of animosity between the two governments (Casquiero, 2020). It also suggests that with such poor relations, Spain now may be pushing more heavily within the EU for a firmer response. Meanwhile, as the talks were still underway, Macron urged more EU sanctions: he did this while hosting Argentine President Mauricio Macri ("France Urges More…," 2018), exemplifying development in interregional cooperating on the issue. Overall, early 2018 saw the continuation of the trending EU stance.

Talks collapsed in early February. The EU's recent approach continued, signaling that, at least for the moment, it was not going to relent until the situation changed. On February 8 the Parliament adopted another resolution on Venezuela. This was in response to the ANC's unilateral move to set an alleged presidential election for May 20, moving up the calendar to favor Maduro at a moment of strength. Noting "the situation of human rights, democracy and the rule of law in Venezuela continues to deteriorate; whereas Venezuela is facing an unprecedented political, social, economic and humanitarian crisis, resulting in many deaths," the Parliament backed the sanctions, rejected the ANC's May 20 date, threatened to not recognize such unfree elections, reaffirmed that it considered the ANC illegitimate, and repeated its identification of the AN "as the only legally constituted and recognised parliament in Venezuela" (European Parliament, 2018a). The text also directly condemned the Maduro regime for various abuses and blamed it for the humanitarian crisis (Ibid.). Concern for democracy and human rights and a firm will to act (sanctions, withholding recognition) are more dominant in this resolution than the usual response to human rights issues. Not yet was the EU taking nearly unprecedented positions like in 2019, but it was already taking an uncharacteristically bold stance, especially in its rejection of the regime's decisions about sovereign authority.

The EU was not timid in its judgments on the unfree and unfair environment for the presidential elections in May. On April 19, Mogherini released a statement saying "the European

Union will monitor closely the electoral process and related developments on the ground and stands ready to react through appropriate measures to any decision or action that might continue to undermine democracy, the rule of law and human rights situation in the country" (Council of the EU, 2018b). Mogherini did not preemptively withhold recognition of the elections, but she took the uncommon step of explicitly threatening further EU actions if undemocratic processes continue. On another note, discussing the March visit of Christos Stylianides**,** Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management, to the region to investigate the refugee crisis, Mogheirni said aid was forthcoming (Ibid.).

More strongly, on May 3 Parliament adopted a resolution which called for postponing the elections, "[r]ecall[ing] that under the current circumstances, the European Parliament cannot recognise the elections resulting from this illegitimate process; in this regard calls on the European Union, OAS and 'El Grupo de Lima' to act with united and coordinated voice" (European Parliament, 2018b). This act is far beyond non-binding and diplomatic language. Additionally, it is notable that the Parliament called for cooperation between the EU, OEA ("OAS"), and the Grupo de Lima. With this resolution, the EU demonstrates how far it had come in about a year, and how uncharacteristically active its work for human rights in Venezuela was.

Compare this to similar situations: it is abnormal for the EU to withhold its recognition of fraudulent elections by authoritarian incumbents. Nicaragua's dictator, Daniel Ortega, claimed victory in highly fraudulent elections in a severely authoritarian atmosphere in November 2016 ("Nicaragua's Electoral Farce," 2016). The EU's response was a statement from the EEAS (not even from Mogherini) which "regrets that the electoral process did not provide conditions for an unrestricted participation of all the political forces in the country" and says "[t]he EU stands ready to work with the government issued from these elections" (EEAS, 2016). The Parliament passed no resolution. Less than a year before the EU would utilize recognition and non-recognition in its foreign policy toward Venezuela, in the similar situation of Nicaragua the EU upheld its standard behavior of accepting the authoritarian status quo and committing itself to bilateral work with authoritarians on the issue of their human rights abuses. Four months later, on February 16 2017 the Parliament passed a resolution; while it did note "democracy and the rule of law have deteriorated in Nicaragua in the past years," its language is drastically different that toward Maduro (European Parliament, 2017a). Similarly different is the only action the Parliament calls for, when it "urges the EU to monitor the situation and, if necessary, to assess the potential measures to be

taken" (Ibid.). Weeks into a government massacre of hundreds of peaceful protestors and arrests and torture of thousands ("Nicaragua: tres meses…," 2018), the next resolution came on May 31 2018 (European Parliament, 2018c). That resolution "deplores" and "denounces" the regime (Ibid.). But again its only measures are "warn[ing] against the serious political, economic and investment consequences which might follow the breaches of human rights" (Ibid.). No further action has come. On October 2 2018 Mogherini expressed EU support for dialogue and "call[ed] on the government of Nicaragua to stop the disproportionate use of force against demonstrators" (Council of the EU, 2018g). On January 21 2019 the Council adopted conclusions which "firmly condemns the repression of the press and civil society" and "underlines its [the EU's] readiness to use all its policy instruments to contribute to a peaceful negotiated way out of the current crisis and react to further deterioration of human rights and rule of law" (Council of the EU, 2019a). Yet nothing has been done. Years into a rapid and drastic construction of an authoritarian state, the EU's response is markedly checked compared to policies toward Maduro. The contrast to the Council and the EU's policy toward Venezuela is vivid. Its response to Venezuela is noteworthy.

On May 3, weeks before the alleged elections, the Parliament had declared "the conditions for credible, transparent and inclusive elections are not met," and said it would not recognize them (European Parliament, 2018b). Such a call before the alleged election is uncommonly activist and unobjective. Two days after the farcical May 20 "election," on May 22 Mogherini released a statement (Council of the EU, 2018d). After noting "[m]ajor obstacles to the participation of opposition political parties and their leaders, an unbalanced composition of the National Electoral Council, biased electoral conditions, numerous reported irregularities during the Election Day, including vote buying, stood in the way of fair and equitable elections," she says "[t]herefore, as advanced in our statement of April 19th, the EU and its member states will consider the adoption of adequate measures" (Ibid.). Though not withholding recognition here, this shows that the EU was committed to its previous warnings and working to take further action. This is far from the typically uncommitted defense of human rights through infrequent, measured, and vague affirmations seen in part two.

Decisively, on May 28 the Council adopted "conclusions on Venezuela" (Council of the EU, 2018e). The Council identifies systematic abuses of the democratic processes, and says they "led to these elections being neither free nor fair" (Ibid.). And it "calls for the holding of fresh presidential elections in accordance with internationally recognised democratic standards and the

Venezuelan constitutional order" (Ibid.). Without saying so then, the EU here is implicitly not recognizing the officially declared outcome, almost indirectly revoking its recognition of Maduro as president. Such an intergovernmental decisions represents uncommon political will. Additionally, the Council says, "the EU will enhance its diplomatic outreach with all relevant national, regional and international actors, recognising especially efforts by Latin American and Caribbean partners that have offered their assistance and support to the process of overcoming the crisis in Venezuela" (Ibid.). Two major steps are taken and trends demonstrated here: the EU was increasingly abandoning neutrality, and becoming more forceful on the issue.

The G7 condemned the May 20 process as well: "[b]y failing to meet accepted international standards and not securing the basic guarantees for an inclusive, fair and democratic process, this election and its outcome lack legitimacy and credibility" (European Council, 2018). France, Germany, and the UK are members of the G7. The EU is an invitee, and it was signed to this May 23 statement too (Ibid.). The big three MS and the EU itself doing this represents the EU working with international partners, and a commitment to the assertive stance of the EU toward this issue. It also shows there must be intense push in the EU against anyone opposing the developing harder line.

After May, the EU paid increasing attention to the regional refugee and domestic humanitarian crises developing. Already the EU had been concerned. For example, Parliament's February 8 resolution repeatedly discusses the humanitarian crisis, even framing its support for sanctions and the arms embargo as tied to what it says is government culpability in it (European Parliament, 2018a). Now its response evolved beyond rhetoric. For the first time, the EU provided financial aid to the Venezuelan Crisis. On June 7, Mogherini declared, "'*[w]e cannot remain bystanders to this human tragedy*,'" and the Commission announced "a package of €35.1 million in emergency aid and medium-term development assistance to support the Venezuelan people and the neighboring countries affected by this crisis" (European Commission, 2018a).

A month later, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the Venezuelan Crisis — yet another one; the volume of work on this issue is meaningful in itself—this time on the refugee and humanitarian aspect. In this July 5 resolution the European Parliament said it was "deeply shocked and alarmed by the devastating humanitarian situation in Venezuela" (European Parliament, 2018d). But in addition to expressing concern or describing a tragedy, there was a real push for action. The resolution called on the regime to allow humanitarian aid and to address the

democratic crisis with free elections (Ibid.). It also called for an international plan to assist "refugees," commended Latin American countries for helping fleeing Venezuelans, and called on MS to do the same (Ibid.). These steps go beyond discussions on the issue in the previous resolutions. The last demand is particularly bold given the EU's destabilizing debate at the time about accepting refugees (Galston, 2018; Banchon, 2018). Additionally, the resolution flatly states the EU "does not recognise the elections or the authorities put in place by this illegitimate process," and it extensively discusses the human rights and their abuse by the regime (European Parliament, 2018d). Notably, the resolution also says, "the government itself has been responsible for the current humanitarian crisis in the region," based on a report by the OAS (Ibid.). This demonstrates the EU's increased commitment to regional Latin American partners in its foreign policy toward Venezuela, something which previously was limited in general and on this issue. Finally, the resolution "fully supports the preliminary investigations of the ICC into the extensive crimes and acts of repression perpetrated by the Venezuelan regime, and calls for the EU to play an active role in this regard" (Ibid.). This is a direct call for real action from the Parliament and demonstrates unusual EU resolve move beyond non-binding rhetorical interest or concern, and it shows an interest in increasing EU influence by working through available international frameworks. All of these are strategies not universally pursued in response to similar crisis.

As shown by the July 5 resolution, the EU did not drop its work on the human-rights and democratic part of the problem as it responded to the humanitarian crisis. At the UN's HRC in Geneva, the EU submitted a statement calling for that council to take up certain human-rights issues. Among abuses and atrocities like Myanmar/Burma, Syria, and China, the EU referred Venezuela to that council's attention (EEAS, 2018). Notably, it did so by referring to "the human rights violations as outlined by the independent panel of experts who presented to the OAS on 29 May" (Ibid.); this demonstrates another effort to compliment or cooperate with Latin American partners on the Venezuelan Crisis. Considering the limits of the EU's interest in and relations with Latin America, this represents a positive development. (Regional partnerships are usually crucial to effectively promoting human rights. For example, EU work with ASEAN increased the possibilities for success in its relationship with Myanmar (Paik, 2016, pp. 417-419, 428, 432)). Doing this in its report to a major UN body shows the EU interested beyond statements to attempt to exert influence in outcomes. Refencing regional partners and working through the UN are steps the EU appears to not have utilized well in 2017, and they show the EU's increasing resolve on

human rights and Venezuela. The wave of various humanitarian resolutions and actions from the EU in the first half of 2018 also incorporated the language of human-rights and democracy, and explicitly linked the humanitarian crisis to the authoritarian one. That is, the EU was not avoiding the riskier and tougher political issue.

On June 25 the Council adopted sanctions on a further 11 regime officials for "human rights violations and for undermining democracy and the rule of law" (Council of the EU, 2018f). The official journal publication includes detailed explanations of the abuses committed by the 11 individuals, outlining the Council's reasoning; for example, it explains that one individual is "responsible for supporting and implementing policies and activities which under mine democracy and the rule of law, including the prohibition of public demonstrations, and heading President Maduro's "anti-coup command" which has targeted civil society and the democratic opposition," and another is "responsible for SEBIN's [the secret police] activities which include serious human rights violations such as arbitrary detention" (Official Journal of the European Union, 2018). The EU usually seeks to revoke sanctions and reward perceived compliance (Luengo-Cabrera & Portela, 2015). Yet here the EU is sustaining and broadening sanctions for human rights abuse, which it technically details. Such a course of action exemplifies the EU's resolve in its foreign policy toward Venezuela—a firm human right-based foreign policy.

In 2018 the EU increasingly worked through international organizations. On September 11 the EU delegation at the HRC said "we welcome the reports about Venezuela and Nicaragua" (Press and information team of the Delegation to the UN in Geneva, 2018). Of this speech's 11 topics, Venezuela was one, showing continued interest and an effort to work through important international organizations. Spending its limited international political capital trying to exert influence and secure results through international organizations, the EU called for international cooperation on human rights in Venezuela and other places. Through 2018 the EU seemed to demonstrate that it would not lose interest in the Crisis nor helplessly tolerate sustained abuse. 2018 shows the EU increasingly deploying its available tools, such as the ability to press issues at the HRC.

France took action on its own. In hindsight, considering for example Macron's agitations in 2019 ("Emmanuel Macron warns…," 2019; Zaretsky, 2019) and 2020 (Brzozowski, 2020) for transformational reform of European foreign policy thinking, this is not surprising. Macron joined Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Paraguay, Perú, and Canada in referring the Maduro regime to the

International Criminal Court (ICC) to be investigated for crimes against humanity (Ramírez Hernández, 2018**)**. This was a major act for France. Done outside of the EU, the action nevertheless applies some pressure to the rest of the EU to either act as individual MS or supranationally to pursue a similarly escalated step of some kind. As *El Colombiano*'s Andrés Oppenheimer said, "'France can move the board…[because it] is talking to Germany, Spain, the Netherlands, among other European countries'" (Ibid.). Although France's action did not succeed in pulling other MS along, it shows France's position, and suggests that it was likely pushing within the EU for a forceful policy toward Maduro.

In September 2017 the Parliament had backed ICC investigations of the Maduro regime and called "for the EU to play an active role in this regard**" (**European Parliament, 2017c). But other MS did not heed the Parliament or follow France. This is an example of how the EU was not fully uninhibited in utilizing its available tools in its foreign policy toward Venezuela in 2018.

At the Foreign Affairs Council meeting on October 15, among other issues, the Council discussed Venezuela and agreed "to explore the possibility of establishing a contact group" which could support the process of a political solution in Venezuela (Council of the EU, 2018h). And on October 23 Mogherini delivered a major speech "at the European Parliament plenary session on the situation in Venezuela" (Mogherini, 2018). About a year into sanctions and a stronger rhetorical stance, Mogherini said "today, the situation has not improved at all – on the contrary. So, we stick to our decision [to impose sanctions], and the restrictive measures will stay as long as human rights are violated and democratic principles are disregarded" (Ibid.). She reaffirmed that the solution to the crisis "has to be a democratic outcome, involving all Venezuelans" (Ibid.). Correspondingly, on November 6 the Council renewed the sanctions for another year (Council of the EU, 2018i).

Mogherini's speech was followed by the adoption of another resolution by the Parliament on October 25. This resolution is particularly comprehensive. It discuss the humanitarian crisis and the regime's authoritarianism in detail (European Parliament, 2018h). Significantly, it, "[f]ully supports the preliminary statement of the ICC on the extensive crimes and acts of repression perpetrated by the Venezuelan regime against its own citizens; urges the Union and the Member States to join the initiative of the ICC State Parties to investigate crimes against humanity committed by the Venezuelan government" (Ibid.). Speaking to the EU, the Parliament also calls for greater humanitarian funding and a mission to Perú in 2019 to investigate the refugee crisis,

supports the Council's intention to explore forming an international and regional contact group, and calls for more sanctions "if the situation of human rights and democracy in the country continues to deteriorate" (Ibid.). Furthermore, it calls on Interpol to investigate political persecution of opposition leaders by Maduro. Finally, the Parliament "underlines to the VP/HR that, while exploring the possibility of launching the contact group, contacts need to be made with legitimate representatives of the Venezuelan democratic opposition in order to verify whether there is a majority in favour of such an initiative" (Ibid.). This represents a dramatic increase in the importance and legitimacy given to the opposition by the EU (or at least the Parliament); it suggests the process of the transformation, how the EU went from its pattern of bilateral actions to recognizing the opposition over the de facto and de jure authoritarian government. This resolution exhibits the EU's transformed response: sanctions, funding, regional involvement, international collaboration, strong language, direct condemnations, and a focus on human rights. Calls on the EU to work through international frameworks and the Parliament directly backing ICC and Interpol investigations of Maduro demonstrate a newly active and collaborative approach. Such cooperation became the foundation of its response beginning in early 2019. Here it is clearly shown that the EU is approaching such a course.

In November 2018 the European Parliament published an extensive report titled "Rule of law and human rights in Cuba and Venezuela and EU engagement" (Engstrom, & Bonacquisti, 2018). The report emphasizes human rights in the EU's foreign policy toward these two states. Even as the EU was historically pushing for a normalized relationship with Cuba (Knobloch, 2018)—and bringing itself in conflict with Trump's America to do it ("EU, Cuba build…," 2018)—the Parliament did not sideline or de-prioritize human-rights in its foreign policy toward Venezuela. The report soberly notes that Parliament has failed to engage the issues through the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly "largely due to internal splits concerning the appropriateness of condemning the Venezuelan government for what some parliamentarians consider would amount to undue interference in the country's internal political affairs" (Engstrom, & Bonacquisti, 2018, p. 51). The report emphasizes evaluating sanctions, dialogue as the ultimate solution, and the possibility for the EU to facilitate dialogue "in cooperation with relevant regional institutions and groupings," and other states and international organizations (Ibid., pp. 55-57). This report remains generally steadfast in supporting and encouraging the EU's "increasingly robust" stance toward Venezuela as fitting with a "background of increasing international pressure" (Ibid.,

pp. 53-54). Coming from a debate and various actors (Ibid., p. 9), this report demonstrates the broad commitment of EU policymakers to promote human rights in authoritarian Latin America states, but especially in Maduro's Venezuela.

Finally, on December 4 the Commission allocated a further €20 million to the Venezuelan humanitarian crisis. Stylianides said "'*I have seen first-hand the anguish and suffering of many Venezuelans, who have been forced to leave their homes by the unfolding crisis in the country. The EU remains committed to help those in need in Venezuela, as well as the host communities in neighbouring countries'" (*European Commission, 2018c). The year's €55 million in humanitarian relief backs up this rhetoric. Large amounts of money for areas not related to EU's interests in such a time of extreme budget pressure and Eurosceptic sentiment shows a significant resolve.

About two months later, this determination and commitment resulted in a far more drastic and novel policy, surely already in the works privately. As with the previous section, here a few general notes for the year will be considered before the concluding chapter, which will review the findings and their importance.

Since Spain has closer ties with Latin America than most if not all other MS, and being a middle power in the EU, it is particularly relevant case study of a MS during this time. After the diplomatic spat in January, Spain and Venezuela re-established relations in April (Casquiero, 2018a). After replacing the conservative PM in June (Alberola, 2018), Socialist Pedro Sánchez abandoned the hardline policy toward Venezuela of the previous government and adopted one instead focused on dialogue (Casquiero, 2018b). (The New foreign minister, Josep Borrell, would become HR/VP in December 2019, but in that role maintain the EU's firm stance against Maduro.) Sánchez complimented this renewed emphasis on dialogue with less support for democratic opposition—for example, on a historic visit to Cuba, he did not meet with activists or dissidents (González, 2018). At an October meeting of the EU, Borrell was set to push for working with Maduro instead of sanctions (**"**Spain Pushes Dialogue…," 2018). Meanwhile, without political power but nevertheless still relevant, Zapatero increasingly sided with the Maduro regime, for example by insisting the farcical presidential elections in May were legitimate (Manetto, 2018). Given Spain's "pivotal role" in the EU's pressure on Maduro, the policy of Sánchez, and even of Zapatero, are significant (Arostegui, 2018). Finally, the government's policy is complicated by the

incorporation of the debate on Venezuela into Spain's fierce domestic political arguments (Torres, 2018). In the end, the EU's policy did not soften—through 2018 it hardened, and soon the drastic policy of 2019 would emerge. But Spain's position demonstrates the complexity of factors—including domestic politics and party ideology—which are acting on EU policymakers during this time. It makes the response since 2017 even more notable. At the very least, it is clear that the EU truly wanted to do this, if it overcome such diverse obstacles to adopting its strong stance.

One aspect of the EU's foreign policy toward Venezuela in 2018 is an increased worry about conflict and escalation. As the authoritarianism continued and the humanitarian catastrophe escalated, the risk of conflict correspondingly increased (Center for Preventive Action, 2019); the EU was clearly worried about this. Mogherini's speech on October 23 demonstrates this: "We should try – I believe – any peaceful option to end the current stalemate and prevent a violent escalation" (Mogherini, 2018). Mogherini also said "any sustainable political solution to the Venezuelan crisis has to be democratic and peaceful" (Ibid.). In fact, her speech began by noting rising tensions. Mogherini said "our immediate request to the government of Venezuela is that it takes unilateral confidence-building steps to ease tensions" (Ibid.). EU concern about conflict was manifested in all EU rhetoric through 2018, and featured increasingly prominently. In December 2018, the Parliament released a report on the Venezuelan Refugee Crisis, subtitled "a growing emergency for the region" (Gómez Ramírez, 2018). It warned "[t]his mass migration could have a destabilising effect on the main recipient and transit countries" (Ibid., p. 1). Here is a telling example of the EU's increasing worry about potential regional effects of the Venezuelan humanitarian and democracy crisis. Yet, while the EU remained concerned about conflict and committed to peace, as shown in this subsection it did not uphold these principles by embracing an authoritarian status quo, which would be more characteristic behavior.

As the EU reacted to the humanitarian crisis and the escalating political impasse, it remained just as unequivocally attentive to the democratic issue. Never did the EU separate the two. That is meaningful. Often the EU prefers to deal with less controversial humanitarian issues and sidestep more challenging political issues. Yet in the case of Maduro's Venezuela it did not compromise its attention to these problems.

Additionally, in the realm of Latin American-EU cooperation, the EU was more attuned to Latin American regional work on the Venezuela Crisis in 2018. On numerous occasions the EU referred to the work of Latin American countries and regional groups. The December report

examine the diverse regional response to the refugee crisis (Ibid. pp. 10-11). The Parliament's May 3 resolution "calls on the European Union, OAS and 'El Grupo de Lima' to act with united and coordinated voice" (European Parliament, 2018b). This is progress from, more concrete and forceful than, the April 27 2017 resolution, which only called on the HR/VP "to actively explore with international and regional organisations other measures that would enable the EU to restore full democracy to Venezuela" (European Parliament, 2017b). In 2018 the OEA and Grupo de Lima were the most active political groups of Pan-American states working for human rights in the Venezuela Crisis, and the EU refers to their findings frequently. However, it is noteworthy that the EU does not appear to have seriously worked with either of these groups. This is another missed opportunity, especially because the EU is comfortable with working with regional blocs. It is possible it would be cumbersome, or simply less effective, to attempt to produce policies from a single EU-Pan-American bloc rather than dual pressure from both regional blocs. And, 2019 would soon reveal that in 2018 the EU-MERCOSUR talks were nearing triumph after twenty years (European Commission, 2019b), so maybe interregional focus was diverted. At the same time, the institution already established for Latin American-EU partnership, the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly, did not work to solve Venezuela's human rights and humanitarian crisis, nor did it develop any response at all, but only said, "[w]e urge the governments to solve the political problems that have led to this suspension [of bilateral ties]" (Asamblea Parlamentaria Euro-Latinoamericana, 2018). So, we see the EU is, in multiple ways, now more attentive to and concerned with Latin America, and that is positive for the region, but it also did not fully utilize opportunities for more integrated action which could have produced more effective policies.

The same pressures from 2017 apply to the EU in 2018. Globally, Russia, Cuba, and China gave instrumental concrete support (Cara Labrador, 2019). If confronting concerted efforts from rival powers (or in the case of Cuba, active and influential regional states) is necessary to back human rights and democratic oppositions, this makes the EU's job harder (and, perhaps, greater effort less likely). Additionally, 2018 only meant a continuation and escalation of the Trump effect. Trump praised authoritarians (Calamur, 2018a), fought with America's European allies (Johnson & De Luce & Tamkin, 2018; Walt, 2018), and downplayed human rights rhetorically and practically (Miller & Lemire & Lucey, 2018; Margon, 2018). This behavior further weakened what remained of the liberal world order (Patrick, 2018; Haass, R. N., 2018). In 2018 the EU was left increasingly alone—and therefore limited—in globally upholding any liberal standards and

defending human rights (Erlanger & Bennhold, 2019; Berlinski, 2018). Domestically, while 2018 in some ways represented a stabilization of the EU's populist explosion, it remained a formidable menace. Populist and nationalist public opinion continued to oppose humanitarian foreign policies (Hockenos, 2018). An activist and diplomatic foreign policy, especially on non-core issues, is in conflict with the desires of domestic populists (Cadier, 2019). So the kind of activist, altruistic, and supranational foreign policy deployed by the EU toward Venezuela risked aggravating populist public opinion domestically. The EU continued to incur domestic cost, or at least risk and pressure, on itself for its altruistic supranational efforts. Finally, 2018, even more than 2017, featured the parasitical attention required by Brexit negotiations and the corresponding political drama. Brexit negotiations created chaos and a distraction which occupied much of top EU policymakers attention, preventing the focus required to effectively deal with other top challenges (Erlanger, 2019; Dodman, 2019; Merritt, 2018). And the aftershocks from Brexit's blow to the popularity and strength of the EU potentially undermined the EU's ability to pursue a stronger foreign policy (Oliver et al., 2018, pp. 32-33; King, 2018; "The real danger…," 2016). Thus, the EU's foreign policy toward Venezuela in 2018—a firm and active stance, commitment, and large funding—was not effortless or easy. Four intense factors made this job even harder. Taking these pressures into account, the unusual strength of the EU's response is even more notable.

Words and actions from the EU on the Venezuela Crisis were far higher in quantity and quality than in 2017. The EU stuck with the impactful decision it had made (over the course of a few months if not at once) in 2017 to take a strong stand for human rights issues in Venezuela. The EU pursued new avenues of action in 2018, and stayed persistent. Its action was less restrained, its characteristically wary stance largely abandoned. It also did not act in isolation either, taking its case to the UN, sometimes following Latin American regional work on the issue, and some larger MS took their own actions. Of course, limitations remained. For example, cooperation with the regional partners remained minimal. Examined after 2019, the EU's bold stance in that year can be seen as a culmination of a two year trend of concern, shock, interest, commitment, and resolve. By the end of 2018, the EU had narrowed the gap between its rather typical foreign policy towards Venezuela in 2016 and its novel one beginning in early 2019.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

Since early 2019, Maduro has successfully defied the popular sovereignty and support of Guaidó and the AN to remain in power. Despite this setback, the EU has upheld its policy of backing and recognizing Guaidó and the opposition, and explicitly opposing Maduro. In fact, over time more MS have recognized Guaidó, as Greece did in July 2019 ("Greece recognizes Venezuela's…," 2019). Support was not unlimited however, as even Germany, months after recognizing Guaidó, had still declined to accept Guaidó's ambassador (Pieper, 2019). Nevertheless, since January 2019 the EU's novel stance has held. The Council renewed (Council of the EU, 2019f) and added sanctions (Council of the EU, 2019e). Condemnation has continued (Council of the EU, 2019d), and the explicit opposition to Maduro has not diminished (European Parliament, 2019c). Partnership with the region developed. In October 2019 Mogherini hosted an "International Solidarity Conference on the Venezuelan Refugee and Migrant crisis" with regional and international partners in Brussels, and the joint statement praised and pledged a Latin American-based approach (EEAS, 2019b). At a corresponding press conference, Mogherini said "Latin America is a continent that is important for Europe" (Mogherini, 2019). Funding for humanitarian relief has increased (European Commission, 2019a). Since December 2019, HR/VP Borrell has upheld the EU's stance (Council of the EU, 2019g; Council of the EU, 2020), abandoning his recent position while FM for the Spanish government. A year after the de facto unsuccessful inauguration attempt, the Parliament reaffirmed its support for Guaidó (European Parliament, 2020b).

Since January 2019, the EU's novel policy during this time has not changed, despite failure to achieve democratic transition. This commitment demonstrates the remarkable attitude the EU has adopted in its foreign policy toward Venezuela. The EU never recognized, for example, the Syrian opposition as the de jure state of Syria, and as the totalitarian and genocidal regime and its Russian ally used supreme violence to re-establish control since 2015, the EU steadily decreased its attention to the issue and support for the opposition, a course of action inverse to its response to the Venezuela Crisis during the disappointing success of authoritarianism the last year and a half.

As shown in part two of the analysis, the EU's foreign policy toward other human rights issues is generally not active, assertive, or impressive. This is especially the case when those human rights abuses are being committed in countries which are geopolitically remote from the EU. Many regions of the Global South are outside the EU's political influence even if it tried: after all, the EU is historically—and still primarily—an economic actor. The EU's ability to project human rights in situations where actors are not open to voluntarily upholding them are severely limited. Usually the EU is hesitant to deploy its tools—strong rhetoric, economic privileges conditional on reform, and sanctions—and limited if it does. Diplomatic and objective language, bi-lateral cooperation, and non-binding declaratory rhetoric (usually rather moderate) are typically the core of the EU's foreign policy to human rights issues. This means the EU's effect on these situations is often limited. Venezuela was not a valued partner the EU would have been hesitant to challenge, but neither was it a country the EU already had established methods to seriously influence it. Before 2017, its attention to Venezuela's human rights abuses was minimal, as part one of the analysis showed. Part two shows this is characteristic. But as parts three and four show, since 2016, things have been different. The EU responded more forcefully here than to a similarly distant—and morally far more critical—crisis in Myanmar, and to a contemporary case of similar levels of authoritarianism and humanitarian crisis in Zimbabwe, for example.

The EU's foreign policy toward Venezuela in 2017 and 2018 is vividly atypical. The volume of its attention was nearly unprecedented, especially for a human rights issue in a geopolitically distant region. Almost immediately after the emergence of the Crisis in early 2017, the EU began to employ sharp rhetoric in defense of human rights. Its language quickly became harsher, from neutral calls for respecting human rights to direct condemnation of the government. Already by fall 2017 it was officially legitimizing and increasingly siding with the democratic opposition. The EU adopted sanctions, and then upheld them and adopted more. A year into the crisis it began to allocate serious funding for relief as well. There were some international and regional cooperation efforts, especially in 2018, though already in 2017 the Parliament was calling for regional increased EU involvement with regional partners to address the crisis. And the EU was not apolitical. Significantly, 2017 saw the EU break with the de jure government, by recognizing AN and refusing to recognize the ANC. Relatively, the level of attention was extraordinary—the amount of conclusions from the Council, resolutions from Parliament, and statements from the Commission (usually Mogherini) are far more than similar, and even far

worse, cases of human rights abuse receive. Overall, the themes witnessed are of focused EU attention, a politicized stance, a constant call for human rights, resorting to sanctions, increasing regional partnerships, and a clear siding with the democratic opposition. The literature review and analysis parts one and two show why this is significant for EU foreign policy and human rights. Consider the lackluster EU attention to a similar crisis of violent authoritarianism in Nicaragua in recent years, or how during the EU's rapprochement with Cuba it has refused to confer any political legitimacy on the civil and democratic opposition (Mena Rubio & Jennische & Maria Payá, 2018). Through 2017 and 2018, on Venezuela's human rights crisis the EU quickly went from characteristically lackluster to uncommonly active.

Will the EU's behavior here matter going forward? A key part of that answer is to consider why the Venezuela Crisis received such a different response from the EU and its MS than other similar instances of human rights issues in foreign policy. As the methodology chapter explains, because of access and resources this paper does not consider the closed-door political debates and personal discussions of the policymaking process which produced these actions. Without that, it is impossible to definitively know why the EU behaved so differently here. A conclusive analysis of that "why" is a different topic and beyond this paper. But, here six of the most likely potential causes for what happened are presented.

First, for various reasons, Venezuela presented a relatively easy and safe way for the EU to conduct a newly dynamic foreign policy. In Latin America foreign or regional powers in competition with the EU are present to a much less forceful degree than in other regions around the world (Trinkunas, 2016; Ellis, 2017). MS, even Spain and the big three, are not staunchly entangled in conflicting diplomatic, economic, political, or military situations in the region which cause them to staunchly oppose a unified position (Ruano, 2013, pp. 1-2, 4-5). And since Venezuela was not a military conflict, non-military steps remained potentially effective actions and relevance was not beyond the EU's capabilities or willingness. In significant ways, Venezuela was a safer way for the EU to more vigorously confront authoritarianism and defend human rights.

Secondly, there is "a broader European reassessment of Latin America" and the need for closer ties, economically and politically ("Latin America and…," 2019). Latin America's economic development makes it an alluring new partner for an EU eagerly looking for economic opportunities (Roy, 2012c, pp. 6-7, 10-11, 20). This is proven, of course, by the breakthrough of the MERCOSUR trade deal (Darlington, 2019), but also by a growing effort of trade deals with

other countries in the region, such as Colombia and Perú (European Union, 2012, pp. 1-4) and Mexico (European Commission, 2020c). Additionally, the region is democratizing and stabilizing rapidly, yet faces various challenges to democracy and a rising threat of influence from America, China, and others (Fernando Blanco, 2016, pp. 10-11). The EU says it wants to develop its partnership with the region (European Parliament 2017c), and likely wats to quickly, before it is crowded out (Nolte, 2018). Finally, given Venezuela's massive oil reserves, perhaps the EU wants and is willing to exert itself to establish a relationship with a democratic ally that would provide such an important benefit.

Third, various components of the EU's relationship with America plausibly affected its policymaking for Venezuela during this period. As the EU-American relationship is perhaps at its worst state since the Cold War (Riddervold & Newsome, 2018, pp. 509-513, 516-517), the Trump administration's focused opposition to Maduro and support for the democratic opposition allows a rare alignment of EU and American positions in foreign policy. The EU may have wanted to take advantage of a rare opportunity to work together and possibly salvage some of the currently endangered alliance. Secondly, the EU wants to increase its global role (Barrosa, 2010; European Union, 2019a, pp. 48-53), and has wanted to challenge American dominion in Latin America (Santander, 2010, pp. 89-90). Now, as America retreats and is rapidly losing its soft power capabilities (Gillespie, 2018), and the EU has reformed this past decade and is incrementally getting stronger (Bergmann, 2019; Moravcsik, 2017), this was a viable opportunity to project itself into the region. Finally, with the liberal world order in tatters, largely due to Trump (Wolf, 2018; Haass, 2018), (most) MS and the EU want to do what they can to preserve a liberal international norm ("Countries team up…," 2018; Daalder& Lindsay, 2018), and Venezuela's human rights crisis presented a clear need for outside states to promote human rights. Multiple calculations from America's actions could have encouraged the EU's novel behavior here.

A fourth conceivable factor is the different nature of Maduro's authoritarianism from early 2017 on. Maduro's authoritarianism became abnormally blatant with his arbitrary actions on the recall process in late 2016, the AN and ANC in early 2017, and protests in mid 2017. Authoritarians often use "stealth authoritarianism" and conduct unfair democratic processes (Varol, 2015, pp. 1684-1718). Yet Maduro increasingly abandoned this norm. North Atlantic states seem to see creating a norm of constraints of democratic procedure on de facto dictatorships as one of the most actionable ways to attempt to influence the situation and give oppressed societies

a real possibility of change. As Maduro violated this norm, the EU may have been worried about the Venezuelan people facing unrestrained authoritarianism, and, to make a statement about this kind of behavior, determined to show an intolerance for it. The trajectory of the EU's hardening stance correlates closely with Maduro's escalating and transparent authoritarianism starting in early 2017. Increased media and civil society salience of this trend also likely applied pressure.

Fifth, Venezuela was one of the world's worst humanitarian catastrophes (Bahar & Dooley 2019). In addition to the human tragedy, there was the political risks of regional instability and conflict in Venezuela. Partly because of the EU's philosophy as a diplomatic and collaborative actor, the EU is often more active in responding to foreign humanitarian than political crises. Given the political risks of Venezuela's humanitarian crisis, the EU could contribute to both humanitarian relief and political progress by being involved in the Venezuela Crisis. Since the humanitarian crisis was Maduro's regime's responsibility (Escobari, 2019), EU policymakers would clearly be interested in securing a transition.

Finally, this crisis may have converged with an EU that had greater resolve than ever before to challenge the narrative and change the facts of its performance on foreign policy and human rights. EU policymakers are presumably not ignorant of the critiques of the EU and its weaknesses, including on foreign policy. As recently defining threats to the EU appear to be fading, for the moment at least—the Euro crisis, terrorism, populism, the Brexit effect—it is possible that EU policymakers have been resolved to demonstrate the EU's ability and potential. Since the issues of foreign policy and Latin America are each disproportionately influenced by the big three and Spain, respectively, it is possible for the EU to be driven to seize an opportunity like this by a small number of resolved policymakers, especially when the issue's core is human rights, a cause various MS regularly support. While the Venezuela Crisis presented a unique opportunity for EU involvement, it is possible it came at the moment when the EU was willing to seize one.

All of these factors—the lower risks of involvement, increased EU interest in Latin America, America's behavior, Maduro's open authoritarianism, the humanitarian crisis, and the EU's independent impulses—may explain why beginning in 2017 the EU's foreign policy toward Venezuela was to engage in an uncharacteristically robust defense of human rights in Venezuela.

Definitive answers on exactly why this instance was different would help answer the question about the future. Though unlikely, maybe there is no pattern and this happened almost accidentally. If similar factors occurred again, it is not guaranteed that the EU will adopt a similarly

forceful response. Nevertheless, will the EU adopt this behavior again? Predictions cannot be sure. But we at least can identify some conditions that, if met, could see this type of response replicated in the future.

Analyzing the EU's foreign policy toward Venezuela during this period, and considering factors which may have led to it, allow the consideration of the broader question: What does this mean for the EU and its future? Because the EU responded extraordinarily to the Venezuela Crisis, and because foreign policy is such an important policy area yet one of the EU's weaknesses, especially on human rights issues, this case study is important to think about because it provides a possible indication of how the EU may improve in one of its most important functions. The EU's response to the Venezuela Crisis could signify the start of a new pattern of behavior on foreign affairs and human rights issues. Or this could be an outlier that does not hark a new normal. Or going forward maybe the EU responds more actively to some human rights issues in foreign policy while other times it maintains its characteristic passivity, and then sometimes it is somewhere in between.

Most likely, this third option is the answer for the future. There is no reason to expect the EU to fundamentally change so rapidly (Lehne, 2018), especially on the non-core issue of foreign policy and human rights. But there is also reason to expect that the EU wants to improve its performance (European Commission, 2020d; Hodson & Maher, 2019). Perhaps in the coming years the EU may partially improve, if not wholly reform, its pattern of behavior in these kinds of situations, or at least develop better frameworks that it deploys in some specific cases.

"Foreign policy…issues do not claim a privileged place in public opinion" and "tend to be less salient" (Shapiro & Jacobs, 2002, p. 185), especially when not presenting an imminent threat. At this point, the EU's foreign policy future is likely to be chiefly influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftereffects (Mahbubani, 2020; "The covid-19…," 2020; Rediker & De Maio, 2020). Facing years of disruption and recovery make it even less likely that the EU will attempt reform in this sphere, or that EU citizens will clamor for stronger altruistic foreign actions. If anything, the COVID-19 Crisis and other global trends may make the EU less willing to be forceful about human rights in its foreign policy in coming years. Even before COVID-19, the odds were not great that reform in this area was coming so soon after the dramatic changes brought by the Treaty of Lisbon (Fitzpatrick, 2018). Maduro's resilience, though not the EU's fault, could also discredit the behavior adopted here. However, maybe the EU is encouraged by the reasonable

claim that things would almost surely have been far worse without its involvement. And maybe success or failure in this specific case will not dictate the broader positive lessons the EU could take from its behavior here.

Yet the EU's response to the Venezuela Crisis demonstrated its capabilities. The EU answered two of its most painful, even embarrassing failures: it honored its ideals of universal human rights, and it demonstrated it can conduct foreign policy in a more forceful, even actionable, way. It is likely that despite being a supranational organization with high roadblocks to increased supranational competence, the EU's recent foreign policy toward Venezuela is an achievement EU policymakers are unlikely to simply disregard. They have proven how the EU can improve its foreign policy, especially on human rights issues. Even if the EU is unwilling or unable to implement this kind of approach again, what it did in its foreign policy toward Venezuela since 2017 is important because it will remain a demonstration of what could be, even without further integration and reform anytime soon. For that reason, and for the good it would do for the world and for the EU, the EU's behavior here matters, and, eventually if not today, might meaningfully affect it in the future.

The EU's different response to the Venezuela Crisis does not mean it has irrevocably changed, nor are its actions entirely unprecedented. But they are uncommon, noteworthy, and significant. This research project is a study of the demonstrated potential of EU foreign policy. The ability of the EU, even within its current supranational constraints, to become significantly more influential, global, and loyal to its objectives and ideals is proven. The EU's foreign policy toward Venezuela in 2017 and 2018, the subject of this study, is in a way even more elucidating than the EU's foreign policy toward Venezuela in 2019 and 2020. Formally recognizing the opposition as the government in 2019 and 2020 is not a template that can always be copied, but 2017 and 2018—comprehensively confronting a regime and supporting the democratic opposition—is a playbook that will only rarely be impractical.

To understand how the EU can improve its foreign policy on human rights issues, studying its recent foreign policy towards Venezuela provides key lessons (this is not to say it is entirely successful, commendable, or correct; but it is to say that the EU has proven it can perform more effectively and influentially, and in general better, than it previously has and often still does). The first step to studying the EU's more active foreign policy towards Venezuela is to examine the EU's foreign policy toward Venezuela during the first two years of the Crisis, 2017 and 2018, how

it got to 2019, as its policy transitioned from typical in 2016 to unprecedented in 2019, with 2017 and 2018 in the middle as unusual. Because of the development of the Crisis, and the EU's nearly unprecedented act of recognizing Guaidó in early 2019, the greatest answer lies not in that year, but before, in how the EU got to the point where it paid so much attention and took such drastic steps. This study shows that before 2019, the EU was paying uncommon attention and deploying unusual tools, such as partisan language, sanctions, and politicized recognition.

This study is limited and brief, so it only looks at public EU foreign policy toward Venezuela at the highest levels: the Parliament, the Commission (including the HR/VP), and the Council, along with noteworthy or demonstrative behaviors of individual MS. However, that analysis is in-depth. Since EU foreign policy is institutionally based on these bodies, this study gives an accurate and sufficient picture of EU foreign policy for this case study. The findings present a clear conclusion. Given the expectations that the EU is unable to increase its coercive tools and develop its ability to be a normative power in international relations (Marsh and Mackenstein 2005, p. 256), these findings are important.

Most who believe in the EU and believe in human rights want a stronger EU foreign policy on these issues. The EU itself wants to work for human rights in the world: "the principles of human rights, peace, and democracy have been deeply embedded in the European integration experiment since its inception" (Ferreira-Pereira, 2012, p. 293). For obvious reasons, human rights in foreign policy is an important goal for the EU—an economically and politically massive supranational democratic union has serious potential, and given the rate of abuse in the world all should want such action. How to do it remains a question. This paper does not necessarily address this, because each case is firmly situational. Nor does this paper judge effectiveness and influence. It does not need to, because the question is not what exactly the EU's foreign policy should be. Because of a general consensus that the EU punches below its weight on international political issues and that the world would be better if the EU in some way was generally was more active on them, demonstrating that this is a possibility by examining a case in which the EU did precisely this is a useful and helpful start. That is what this study has accomplished: there are ways for the EU as it institutionally is, and even when facing fierce political pressures—the EU promoted human rights in Venezuela despite Trump, European populism, global authoritarianism, and Brexit; its inconveniences could hardly have been greater—to more effectively and assertively defend and promote human rights throughout the world.

This paper has shown it is entirely possible for the EU to be attentive, committed, and responsive to a human rights crisis in a geopolitically distant region within the confines of being a supranational union which struggles to execute normative power. From here, hopefully EU foreign policy develops in this direction, but at the same time evaluates effectiveness of various ways to pursue a more active foreign policy and further develop its skills and success so that the grand experiment founded on modern liberal, social, and democratic ideas can honor its goals and responsibilities to work to help spread such rights and dignities beyond those privileged to be born within its borders. It may not, but what it did for Venezuela is still significant. The EU is a challenge to the violent Westphalian Era—the next step then is to forcefully promote human rights as a universal necessity of human civilization.

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