



BRAMUN2026
Brazil Model United Nations

Study Guide
**Political
Committee**

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LETTER FROM THE DAIS

Dear Delegates,

We are deeply honoured to welcome you to the 2026 Political Committee at the Brazil Model United Nations conference! We are thrilled to be chairing the committee this year and look forward to seeing delegates engage in discussion on two significant issues in the modern world: Topic A, Investigating Electoral Integrity and Democratic Processes in Venezuela and Topic B, Balancing the Right to Self-Determination with the Principle of Territorial Integrity.

Delegates must perform in-depth research on the topics presented and debate passionately to defend their delegation's perspective. Given the significance of both topics at hand, delegates must devise both immediate and long-term diplomatic resolutions, aligning their delegation's objectives with the welfare of the international community. We also want to highlight the importance of maintaining a respectful debate, creating a comfortable environment that ensures all participants can enjoy themselves!

As chairs, we are available to assist if you are anxious or concerned and will offer any support you may require before or during the debate. Should you have any questions please do not hesitate to reach out to us via the emails provided below. Once again, we are thrilled to be chairing this committee and eagerly anticipate meeting you!

Sincerely,

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COMMITTEE DESCRIPTION



Special Political and Decolonization Committee of the General Assembly

Upon its establishment in 1945, the United Nations created six general assembly committees, each charged with addressing global challenges. Among these, the “Special Political and Decolonization Committee” was the fourth committee of the assembly, responsible for overseeing self-determination and political issues, as implied by its name. The General Assembly has its headquarters in New York, where all 193 UN Member States are invited to take part.

The Political Committee has been essential in supervising and safeguarding global decolonization efforts. It participates in conversations regarding UN peacekeeping assessments, analyzing the efficiency of missions and providing suggestions on how to enhance their effectiveness and results, contributing significantly to the resolution of worldwide conflicts. In the past few years, the General Assembly has designated numerous agenda items concerning decolonization to the Fourth Committee, primarily focusing on matters related to the activities of Non-Self-Governing territories and their



political and economic structures. Its debates and decisions influences policies, promotes collaboration, and strengthens their UN goal of ensuring global stability.

Topic A: Investigating Electoral Integrity and Democratic Processes in Venezuela



Demonstration that took place on August 8, 2024 in Caracas, Venezuela, one month after elections

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Introduction

Once the wealthiest country in Latin America with a long-lasting democracy, Venezuela is currently experiencing a socio-economic and political crisis that has put over 90% of its population in poverty and brought international attention to the alleged illegitimacy of its electoral system (Jeyaretnam, M. & de Guzman, C., 2026)

Since the death of the president Hugo Chavez in 2013, the politician Nicolas Maduro has won the presidential election for three consecutive six-year terms. This has given him power over the country for more than a decade, however, Maduro claims that his sole aim is to maintain and continue to promote the Bolivarian Revolution established by Chavez in 1999 for the greater good of the Venezuelan people. Meanwhile the global community has repeatedly questioned his victory in elections and internal socio-political turmoil constantly occurs due to political polarization.

According to the Venezuelan National Electoral Council, Maduro won the 2024 presidential election with over 51% of the votes and 80% participation (BBC). Meanwhile, the opposition, led by Maria Corino Machado, argues that the state dishonestly manipulated the polls to secure Maduro's victory while his opponent Edmundo Gonzales won the majority of Venezuelan votes.

Following the election, both Gonzales and Maduro claimed to be the presidents of Venezuela, but with the help of the state military and institutions Maduro successfully secured political power over the country by maintaining control over the military and the socio-political and economic decisions in the government. Meanwhile the G7 questioned the election's legitimacy and called for the release of detailed electoral results in Venezuela, which the state refused to discharge. Until today, the legitimacy of the 2024 Venezuelan presidential elections is questioned both nationally and internationally.

History

Early 20th Century

After the fall of military dictator Marcos Pérez Jiménez in 1958, Venezuela entered a period which is internationally considered one of its most stable democratic instances (Britannica, 2025). The 'Puntofijo Pact' was a formal arrangement that confirmed the 1958 presidential elections and the upholding of the new democratic order; it also stated that there were two main political parties that could run for election in Venezuela: Acción Democrática and COPEI. From the 1960s to the 1980s, the country held formal elections to decide their presidents. The first president after the military dictatorship was Romulo Betancourt, known as the "Father of Democracy". He oversaw the 1963 elections which occurred as the first democratic transfer of power since his role as the outgoing president was to solidify democratic institutions in Venezuela and the population trusted him to do so.

However, by the late 1980s, the system began to present flaws. This period was marked by economic crises, corruption and inequality which caused Venezuelan citizens to lose their trust in traditional parties. In February 1989, government austerity measures were the root of violent protests, famously known as, 'The Caracazo Protests'. Hundreds of businesses were looted in the capital, and despite records showing that 300 people were killed, many believe that it was over thousands (BBC, 2016).

The Chávez Era

In 1983, military officer Hugo Chavez established the leftist Revolutionary Bolivarian movement-200 within the army, using his influence as a mentor to recruit people to fight for his political interests. It is based on the idea of a unified Latin America, also drawing inspiration from the leftist Peruvian military Junta of the 1970s. He became extremely popular after the 'Caracazo Protests' due to widespread civilian discontent. After two coup attempts, Hugo Chavez finally rose to power in 1998, winning about 56% of votes, promising to end corruption,

vanquish poverty and change Venezuela's outdated political systems to open political power to other independent parties, rather than just the two main ones that would run every election (CFR, n.d.).

After taking office, he launched the plan 'Bolivar 2000'. This was an antipoverty campaign that promoted the installation of new roads, housing and widespread vaccination. In 1999, he rewrote the constitution where he reforms the political system, creating a new National Electoral Council (NEC). Initially, elections under his presidency were considered fair by the population, since his constitution was approved by popular referendum (CFR, n.d.). However, over time, his control over institutions, including the NEC, the media and judiciary processes, started to grow. Following these suspicions, opposition leaders were able to collect 2.7 million signatures to hold a presidential recall referendum in 2004 (CFR, n.d.). Chávez wins the election, despite many believing he would lose. Despite accusations of media manipulation and political interference, he maintained strong support until his death in 2013.

The Rise of the Maduro Presidency

Following Chavez's death, his political 'heir' became the current president, Maduro. An intense battle between presidential campaigns ensues between Nicolas Maduro, the president then and the opposition leader Henrique Capriles. Early surveys give Chávez successor a substantial lead, but Maduro won a close election on April 14th 2013 with just 50.6% of the votes and remains as the president of Venezuela in 2025. (CFR, n.d.).

Current Situation

Venezuela is currently experiencing one of the most severe political, economic and humanitarian crises in Latin America. The 2024 presidential elections marked another critical moment in the country's ongoing democratic crisis. Despite hopes raised by the 'Barbados accord', which was meant to ensure fair competition between Maduro and the opposition, the monitoring organization concluded that the elections did not meet the international standards of electoral integrity.

The government is still heavily influenced by Nicolás Maduro which controls all five branches of power in Venezuela: legislative, executive, judicial, citizens' and electoral. Organisations such as the CNE, responsible for regulating the elections, operate under the authority of the president. Therefore, major opposition figures such as María Corina Machado, former deputy of the National Assembly of Venezuela, who openly expresses her dissatisfaction with the current government, was banned from running for presidency, this shows how Venezuela is suffering from a deepening authoritarian consolidation, meaning the government is moving from simply suppressing objection to eliminating all political alternatives entirely.

On July 28, 2024, Venezuelans voted in large numbers. While technical aspects of the election ran smoothly, the transparency of the results was questioned soon after the polls closed. The CNE declared Maduro the winner with 51.2% of the votes, but refused to release detailed results. Meanwhile, the opposition coalition published over 80% of verified polling station results showing their candidate, Edmundo Urrutia, with an overwhelming majority of votes.

Following this announcement, the CNE canceled investigations into the election that they had previously planned, reporting they had been hacked and the Supreme Court validated the results without publishing evidence. The Carter Centre, an American nonprofit with the aim of protecting democracy and promoting cooperation, concluded the election could not be considered

fair due to political manipulation of poll results and the lack of evidence to support the claim that they had not been tampered with.

As of 2025, Venezuela remains in a position of political standstill, with much of the international community wanting to deny the results of the 2024 presidential elections. Negotiations between the current government and opposition continue but prospects for democratic resolution depend heavily on guaranteeing citizens' rights to choose their leaders by strengthening electoral institutions.

Past UN Actions/Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

Following the disputed and controversial election of Nicolás Maduro after the death of Hugo Chávez, the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon publicly urged Venezuelan authorities to take new action. He called for transparency and respect to remain at the forefront of the authorities' priorities. While not tangible, this statement marked the UN's first official recognition of the growing electoral irregularities in Venezuela. Then, as tensions deepened, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) expressed concerns over the growing separation of powers within the Venezuelan political landscape. As the newly elected National Assembly faced judicial obstruction, the UN began to treat the Venezuelan electoral crisis as a threat that extended from a purely political issue into one tied to human rights, democratic integrity, and suffrage. By 2017, following the creation of a parallel Constituent Assembly, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR) condemned Maduro's actions as a "direct attack on democracy." Viewing the move as an attempt to bypass the opposition-led legislature, the UN identified it as further evidence of deliberate manipulation of social rights. Recognizing widespread protests and the presence of state repression, the UN began to see the crisis not as an isolated national issue but as a regional and international concern, guiding its future investigations into Venezuela.

In 2018, Venezuela formally requested the UN Electoral Assistance Division to observe and survey its elections to prove the existence of fair voting conditions. However, the UNEAD officially declined this request, reinforcing international pressure for electoral reform and legitimizing global recognition of Venezuela's flawed electoral process. As conditions deteriorated—with reports of "extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detentions, and political persecution"—the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) took decisive action. It adopted Resolution 42/25, forming the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) to conduct formal investigations. The UN began to link systemic abuses of democracy and repression of rights to an

entrenched pattern of state corruption. This approach legitimized the UN's investigation within the Venezuelan crisis and marked a turning point in its engagement. After the FFM completed its investigation in 2020, its inaugural report concluded that Venezuelan authorities had committed severe human rights violations and multiple crimes against their population. This official declaration provided direct evidence of corruption and state suppression. The report elevated the Venezuelan crisis beyond political mismanagement, placing it within the realm of international criminal accountability and demanding a swift global response.

Even after exposing these violations, the UN faced a delicate balance between maintaining support for the Venezuelan people and respecting national sovereignty. Without a clear resolution in sight, the Human Rights Council extended the FFM's mandate through 2024, enabling further investigations into authoritarian control and ongoing repression. Despite limited access to the country, the UN maintained active engagement to ensure international scrutiny persisted. By 2023 and 2024, the UN facilitated renewed dialogue with the Venezuelan government through the Mexico and Barbados agreements. As the 2024 elections approached, the UN Secretary-General and the OHCHR urged Maduro's regime to guarantee fair electoral conditions. However, these appeals were largely unsuccessful, as the elections remained disputed. Still, the UN's ongoing diplomatic role demonstrated its commitment to supporting nations confronting obstructions to democracy and human rights, setting the stage for future international actions to take place.

POSITION OF MAJOR BLOCS

Venezuela

Led by the reelected Nicolas Maduro, the Venezuelan government affirms that it maintains a fully sovereign democratic electoral system. While rejecting external criticisms and claims of fraud and repression, the Venezuelan delegation should take note of the international community's attempts to impose foreign regime changes, an infringement on its sovereignty. Keeping in mind that Maduro and his political party of the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) have won 82.68 percent of the votes – according to the National Electoral Council – the delegation of Venezuela may be willing to justify the hold which the PSUV has on Venezuela. Moreover, while figureheads such as Maria Corina Machado condemn the alleged electoral manipulation, Maduro responded with the statement, “When the opponent withdraws from the field, we advance and occupy the terrain,” highlighting his ambitious standings in the political landscape. Representing the present government and their position, the Venezuelan delegation must make sure to take notice of the ideas which Maduro has presented, going as far as to fully incorporate them. Moreover, in regards to international relations, even after the years of mismanagement and sanctions, which have devastated the once formidable economy, Venezuela continues to face scrutiny and punishment from countries with close ties to Venezuela. As a struggling country, controlled by an unchallengeable leader, the delegation holds a particularly vulnerable yet powerful position, acting as the key force in determining the best possible future for the country.

United States of America

With the brutal wave of repression and silencing of opposition voices becoming abundantly clear, the United States delegation has taken it upon themselves to help restore the democratic governance and electoral integrity of Venezuela. In years leading up to the current crisis brought to the forefront of the international community's attention, Washington has consistently rejected the legitimacy of Maduro's government. Taking notice of the electoral fraud, repression, and manipulation of state institutions, the United States President Donald Trump has recently revoked permission for oil giant Chevron to continue pumping Venezuelan crude. This action has potential ramifications on Maduro's administration as the U.S. cuts a vital economic lifeline of Venezuela. However, although a step in a direction to aid the restoration of Venezuela, the delegation of the U.S. must take into consideration a moral and ethical dilemma: to what extent should the common population suffer for political bodies to make necessary changes. To further this point, Washington has also revoked deportation protection from 350,000 Venezuelan migrants in the US and expelled hundreds of others to a maximum security prison in El Salvador under President Trump's administration. The U.S. champions targeted sanctions and hopes that through these, Maduro will take proper actions. However, delegates must notice how the crisis requires a nuanced approach that considers the perspective of the population as well as the need to change the country's political landscape.

Russia

Russia holds a crucial position in the discussion of the Venezuelan crisis as it firmly supports Nicolás Maduro's government. Russia views the Venezuelan electoral process and struggles as purely domestic affairs, and in turn, treats the external involvement in the crisis as a form of unacceptable interference and interference on national sovereignty. This moral standing must be a stance for the delegation of Russia to take into consideration when crafting its arguments. However, it cannot be said that ethics is the only reason for Russia's support as analyst Henry Ziemer comments that the exit of Maduro would jeopardize Russia's power projection in Latin America. While Russia maintains ties to countries such Nicaragua and Cuba, Venezuela is seen as the most influential and valuable of these alliances due its resources and size. Thus, Putin continues to seek to rattle the United States and the general Western Hemisphere in their attempts to obstruct the sovereignty of the Venezuelan government. Moreover, the transactional nature between Russia and Venezuela is further highlighted through the active diplomatic support which Venezuela had provided to Russia during their invasion of Ukraine. Russia actively frames its position as a defender of self-determination and multipolarity, all with the characteristically ambitious backing of economic and political intentions. Moreover, though dialogue-based solutions are supported, economic and military cooperations are seen favorably between the two countries thus threatening the maintenance of peace in the world if the following situation is not addressed with caution.

Brazil

As a leading Latin American power, Brazil plays a balancing role which helps to represent several other Latin countries' stances and of those which are currently facing the pressure from the Venezuelan crisis. While condemning the human rights abuses, Brazil stresses the need for non-intervention and peaceful negotiations. Furthermore, Brazil highlights the intensifying effect which external pressures have been having on the internal stability and peace of Venezuela. More specifically, the Brazilian government takes notice of the arrests, threats, and persecution of political opponents which Maduro's administration has undergone. The Maduro government is recognized as having taken drastic measures to ease tensions, and while possibly necessary, much too intense. This is why Brazil maintains its position in stating that Venezuela requires a proper balancing system with a present opposition. The delegation of Brazil must represent Brazil's overall stance which is that the full functioning of a democratic regime requires guaranteeing opposition leaders the fundamental rights to freedom of movement, peaceful expression, and safeguards for their physical integrity. Moreover, while not demanding international intervention, Brazil urges Venezuelan political forces to engage in dialogue and seek mutual understanding. This would allow for internal disputes to peacefully resolve and help find a mutual respect for human rights in favor of the population at large.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Description
1958 Fall of Military Dictatorship	<p>Since 1948, Venezuela was passing through a period of military dictatorship. Since 1952, dictator Jimenez Perez had ruled the country in an authoritarian and repressive regime. In 1957, Perez called for a referendum instead of an election to extend his mandate instead of an election, triggering a mass popular movement against him. After multiple protests, Perez decided to flee to the Dominican Republic on January 23rd of 1958, indicating the fall of military dictatorship and the establishment of the democracy in Venezuela, which would last for the next 40 years.</p>
1989 Caracazo Protests	<p>Due to a fall in oil prices in the mid 1980s, which were the main Venezuelan exports, the country was experiencing a severe economic crisis. As an attempt to fix this, president Carlos Peres signed a contract with the IMF which led to the implementation of several neoliberal economic reforms in Venezuela. This led to a rapid increase in the price of basic goods such as public transport, food, fuel, etc. Consequently, the population was outraged and began protesting violently in favor of a Bolivarian Revolution (socialist movement promoted by Hugo Chavez), to which the president responded by implementing a state of emergency, leading to the death of over 300 people. By the end of the protests, Hugo Chavez was arrested for being considered the</p>

	<p>leader of the protests and Perez was later removed from the presidency due to corruption.</p>
<p>1998 Hugo Chavez Elected President</p>	<p>After being freed from prison in 1994, Hugo Chavez ran for president in the 1998 Venezuelan presidential elections. His campaign promoted the idea of the Bolivarian Revolution: a social reform that would include nationalization programs, social welfare programs and the resistance to liberal reforms. This appealed to the majority of the population's wish for economic equality and support. He won with 56.2% of the votes.</p>
<p>1999 Constitution Rewritten</p>	<p>Hugo Chavez's first presidential order was to issue a popular referendum (19, April, 1998) that led to the creation of the National Constituent Assembly. Popular elections were held to choose the deputies who would contribute to drafting the constitution, and by December of 1999, a public referendum was held to ratify it; the majority of votes were in favor.</p> <p>This new constitution changed the name of the country to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, and established five branches of government: executive, legislative, judiciary, electoral and citizen's branch. The executive power was strengthened, the legislative power was weakened, healthcare was deemed a public right and the presidential term increased from five to six years.</p>
<p>2004 Recall Referendum</p>	<p>Opposition to Chavez grew significantly throughout his first term, which led to the opposition's call for a Recall Referendum: a public voting system to define whether</p>

		<p>or not Chavez should stay in power. Following a petition with 2.7 million signatures of Venezuelan voters who wanted the Referendum to be held, polls opened on the 19th of August. However, the majority of 59% voted that Chavez was to remain as president.</p>
2009	Term Limits Abolished	<p>After being re-elected in 2006, Hugo Chavez knew that he could not legally remain president after 2010 because of the constitution's rule of a maximum of two consecutive terms per president. And so, he held a campaign to abolish this rule with the argument that it was necessary for the development and continuous implementation of the Bolivarian Revolution. And so, a public referendum was held, to which a majority of 54.87% of participants voted in favor of amending the constitution to abolish the two-term presidential limit.</p>
2013	Nicolas Maduro Elected President	<p>Shortly after being re-elected for his fourth term in office, Hugo Chavez died in March of 2013 from cancer. With a power vacuum in the executive power of Venezuela, a new election was held with two main contesters: Nicolas Maduro and Henrique Capriles. Maduro won with a 50.62% majority of votes.</p>
2015	Opposition Wins National Assembly Majority	<p>Parliamentary Elections were held in December of 2015 in Venezuela. For the first time in 16 years, the MUD opposition won an election by majority against the PSUV (Madero's party). However, as $\frac{2}{3}$ of seats in the parliament were reserved for MUD members, political turmoil between the two parties intensified.</p>

<p>2017 Constituent National Assembly Established</p>	<p>Following the opposition dominated National Assembly, Maduro used article 348 of the Constitution to call for a referendum proposing the establishment of a Constituent National Assembly. However, the opposition boycotted the vote because they believed the purpose of this was to increase the power of Maduro and the PSUV. Even so, the Assembly's members were elected and the body was established on the 4th of August of 2017. Four days later, it was declared to be the government branch with supreme power in Venezuela, which banned the performance of the opposition-led National Assembly.</p>
<p>2018 Maduro Re-Elected</p>	<p>Although the Venezuelan presidential election was supposed to be held in December, the date was moved forward to May of 2018. Additionally, the majority of popular leaders from the MUD and other opposition parties were disqualified from participating in the election, such as the former candidate Henrique Capriles. And so, Maduro's main competition was Henri Falcon. In the end, even though most of the opinion polls held before the elections indicated that Falcon would win by a wide margin, the state of Venezuela claimed that Maduro won his second election with 67.8% of the votes.</p>
<p>2019 Juan Guidó becomes Acting President</p>	<p>The opposition-led National Assembly declared Maduro's re-election invalid and proclaimed the Assembly's leader, Juan Guaido, the acting president of Venezuela. While Maduro remained in power, Guaido</p>

	<p>was recognized as the president of Venezuela by the USA, and multiple European and Latin American countries. Maduro simply claimed that this was the USA's attempt to take control of Venezuela as a puppet state through the interim president. Meanwhile, Guaido unsuccessfully attempted to establish a provisional government.</p>
<p>2020 Provisional Government Propositions</p>	<p>The USA had heavy sanctions imposed upon Venezuela since 2019 as an opposition to Maduro's government. However, in March of 2020, they proposed to lift all sanctions if he were to agree to hold a democratic election that did not include himself or Guaido as candidates. While Guaido accepted the proposal, Maduro denied it.</p>
<p>2020 Parliamentary Elections</p>	<p>While the state held parliamentary elections in Venezuela 27 different opposition parties denied participation in the electoral process because they believed that it would be a fraudulent and unfair election. Moreover, while the election still occurred, multiple nations in the international community did not recognize its results and expressed their concern for the political situation in Venezuela.</p>
<p>2024 Presidential Elections</p>	<p>As Maduro ran for president once again, his main opposition was the diplomat Edmundo Gonzalez, from PUD. The opinion polls held before the election demonstrated a clear majority of votes granted for Gonzalez. However, the official election results</p>

	<p>accounted for Maduro's re-election with 51.95% of the votes. Following the elections, Gonzalez fled to Spain, social unrest spread as protests throughout the nation and thousands of citizens were arrested.</p>
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DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Acción democrática

Known in English as "Democratic Action", this political party was founded in Venezuela in 1936 under the name of "National Democratic Party", a period when the Venezuelan government had relaxed its laws regarding the creation of new political organizations. However, by the end of 1937, the dictatorship, in fear of growing opposition, installed more rules. A new anticommunist politician took over the leadership of the party and renamed it to give it its current name.

COPEI

This political party is also known as the Social Christian Party, being the second most powerful political party in Venezuela after "Democratic Action". It was founded on 13 January 1946, and signed the Puntofijo pact in 1958, which made it one of the largest parties in Venezuela.

Unión Republicana Democrática

This centrist political party was founded on the 18th of December 1945. It is created based on Democratic principles. Its motto is "For bread, land and freedom". The top leader of this political party, Jóvito Villalba joined in March 1946, however, the party is not currently allowed to partake in elections.

National Electoral Council (NEC)

The National Electoral Council was created after the 1999 constitution and is head of one of the five branches of government in Venezuela (electoral branch). It has the responsibility of overseeing and ensuring the transparency of all elections and referendums held in Venezuela. It has often been described of being in favor of the current Venezuelan president, Maduro, by opposition.

Recall referendum

This is a mechanism that can be used to remove a current political official from office before the end of his or her term. It is based on the principle that government officials are representatives of the citizens and should, therefore, be under their constant control.

Democratic Unity Roundtable (MUD)

The MUD is a coalition that brings together over 20 political parties that stand opposed to the current president, Maduro. It was formed in 2008 in opposition to Maduro's United Socialist Party of Venezuela in the 2010 Venezuelan parliamentary election.

FURTHER RESEARCH

1. Venezuelan Presidential Crisis:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Venezuelan_presidential_crisis#Internal_parliamentary_election_disrupted
2. Venezuela's opposition says July 2024 vote rigged | DW News:
https://youtu.be/j4Q6-nNHIRA?si=Wlnw_YAANuqdc4EV
3. 2024 in Review: The aftermath of Venezuela's contested election | The Take:
<https://youtu.be/hQNqrVGKKc0?si=hWCnFnM22uPIBW7T>
4. Observation of the 2024 Presidential Election in Venezuela:
https://www.cartercenter.org/resources/pdfs/news/peace_publications/election_reports/venezuela/venezuela-final-report-2025.pdf
5. Two People Claim to Be President of Venezuela – Will US Militarily Intervene?:
<https://venezuelanalysis.com/opinion/two-people-claim-to-be-president-of-venezuela-will-us-militarily-intervene/>
6. The integrity of the Venezuelan presidential election is under scrutiny
<https://www.npr.org/2024/08/06/nx-s1-5064231/the-integrity-of-the-venezuelan-presidential-election-is-under-scrutiny>
7. Edison Research Conducts Exit Poll in Venezuela
<https://www.edisonresearch.com/edison-research-conducts-exit-poll-in-venezuela/>
8. Unofficial Online Presidential Election Polls via VZLA:
<https://resultadosconvzla.com>

9. Venezuela - Freedom House

<https://freedomhouse.org/country/venezuela/freedom-world/2025#PR>

10. Venezuela: CNE Ratifies Maduro Victory, Supreme Court Demands Voting Records and Hacking Evidence

<https://venezuelanalysis.com/news/venezuela-cne-ratifies-maduro-victory-supreme-court-demands-voting-records-and-hacking-evidence/>

11. Venezuela - Global State of Democracy Initiative

<https://www.idea.int/democracytracker/country/venezuela>

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- ❖ What measures is your delegation willing to implement to ensure independence and neutrality while risking the possibility to worsen humanitarian conditions?
- ❖ To what extent does your delegation believe that the UN has the jurisdiction to implement international sanctions to promote democratic reforms in Venezuela?
- ❖ How can the UN support free and fair elections without infringing on the nation's sovereignty?
- ❖ Does your delegation believe that national elections should be monitored and verified by the international community, keeping in mind the presence of domestic and international stakeholders?
- ❖ To what extent should regional organizations play with the UN to mediate Venezuela's political landscape. Should they hold more of a say in what occurs within the country?

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Topic B: Balancing the Right to Self-Determination with the Principle of Territorial Integrity



Protest in Barcelona on the 1st of October, 2018

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Introduction

The world is composed of 195 recognized independent nations, however, there are several of separatist movements that challenge this number. While all peoples, meaning every group of humans united by ethnicity, religion, culture or history, have the inherent right to self-determination, these one hundred and ninety five sovereign countries also have the right to territorial integrity.

The principle of self-determination states that all peoples have the freedom to determine their own political status and pursue social and economic goals. This is a right of peoples, because while an individual cannot independently declare themselves to be of an original nationality, groups of people united by culture, religion, ethnicity, history, race or geographical position are free to pursue their own political identity. However, all peoples around the world who wish to create their own nation already live within sovereign countries. Consequently, whenever a group of people exercises their territorial integrity to attempt and create their own sovereign nation, a separatist movement emerges. Hence, the country to which the land originally belongs will inevitably lose territory if the movement is successful. Moreover, territorial loss always poses social, economic and political consequences, affecting a nation's structure, stability and development.

With that said, separatist movements often conflict with a nation's territorial integrity: the idea that every sovereign state's territory and borders should be inviolable to promote geopolitical stability. The concept also argues that countries are allowed to defend themselves from any threats imposed upon their territories.

Due to this contradiction, attempts to exercise self-determination often leads to turmoil and conflict within a nation, occasionally even escalating to civil wars and armed disputes. Thus, threatening the life and human rights of all people in the area as well as the geopolitical stability of the region.

Overall, it is imperative to respect the inherent right to self-determination of peoples around the world in accordance with the concept of territorial integrity, as balance in diplomacy is key to conflict resolution, stability and peace.

History

Origins

The origins of self-determination and territorial integrity can be traced back to events that took place in the 18th and 19th century such as the Enlightenment, which promoted reason, individual liberty and natural rights, as well as the rise of nationalism. Movement across the globe such as the American and French Revolution in 1776 and 1789 respectively, emphasized that the people had the right to govern themselves according to shared identity and consent. Meanwhile, the idea of territorial integrity developed as a part of the state system established in the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, which replaced the traditional idea of the Christian commonwealth governed by universal institutions with an international order that consisted of independent sovereign states (Grote, R., n.d.). From the very beginning, these two ideas carried tensions against each other.

Post World War I

After World War I, President Woodrow Wilson's advocacy for self-determination in his fourteen points introduced the importance of this idea in an international setting. However, its implementation was limited and inconsistent as it clashed with other powerful European countries' goals of pursuit of territorial claims and revenge against Germany (Thomas, C., 2014). As a consequence, self-determination was not included in the Treaty of Versailles. Japan, for example, wanted part of Chinese territory and threatened to leave the League of Nations if their request was not granted, and so Wilson betrayed his own ideals and put millions of Chinese Civilians under the control of the Japanese government to benefit the League of Nations (Thomas, C., 2014).

Wilson intended self-determination to apply to Europe, where countries such as Finland, Latvia, Poland and Czechoslovakia were granted this right among many others, but colonies in Africa, Asia and the Middle East, such as Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Palestine were placed under League of Nations

mandates (Johnston, M. n.d.). The League's focus on maintaining order and respecting existing borders reflected a priority of territorial integrity over universal self-determination.

Post World War II & Cold War

The end of WWII and the creation of the United Nations in 1945 marked a turning point in the relationship between these two principles. The UN Charter recognized both self-determination in Art. 1(2) and the obligation to respect territorial integrity in Art. 2(4) (Oeter, S. 2024). In the following decades, the process of decolonization transformed the international setting as countries like India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka gained independence from the British Empire; Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia from France and the Philippines from the United States (Webster, R. & Magdoff, H., 2025).

The end of the cold-war led to the disintegration of multinational states such as the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia (Vilanova, P. & Lopez, O, n.d.). In many cases, movements for independence were met with resistance from central governments determined to preserve territorial integrity. An example would be Biafra in Nigeria in the 1960s, whose secessionist movement was met with military force from the Nigerian government, who wanted to maintain the country's territorial integrity (Weller, M., 2009). By the end of the century, it was clear that while both principles were firmly implanted into international law, their coexistence was marked by contradictions and dispute.

Current Situation

The most modern example of territorial integrity being challenged is the Russo-Ukrainian war. Russia claims self-determination for regions such as Crimea and Donbass, while the UN strongly reaffirms Ukraine's territorial integrity (D. Dzvinchuk, 2023). Russia argues that the Russian-speaking populations in areas of Ukraine such as Zaporizhzhia, Donetsk and Luhansk are exercising their rights to self-determination through referendums to join Russia, invoking the largely unaccepted "remedial succession" theory, which suggests that people are allowed to secede if they face severe oppression (Ranjan, P. & Anil, A., 2022). Even under this theory, Russia's claims fail because the alleged human rights violations against Russian speakers in Ukraine were not deemed severe enough to warrant secession.

In the South Caucasus, after the dissolution of the USSR, the Nagorno-Karabakh region, situated between Armenia and Azerbaijan became subject to the territorial dispute between the two countries. This resulted in conflict in the area, where people from the Nagorno-Karabakh region demanded self-determination, making way for secessionist movements. In the late 1980s the region declared independence citing their right to self-determination, forming the Republic of Artsakh (Christianti, D., 2024). However, Azerbaijan viewed this as a violation of their territorial integrity, accusing Armenia of unlawful lying intervening in the formation of this new state, and today, refuses to negotiate their political future until Armenian troops withdraw. Historically, Artsakh is unable to provide sufficient proof to attest for the legitimacy of its separation from Azerbaijan, despite them claiming they had suffered from systematic discrimination as reason for their secession.

Meanwhile, the Guyana-Venezuela Essequibo dispute has been taking place. Venezuela claims the Essequibo region, which is rich in oil and minerals, arguing that the borders should be decided by the Essequibo river, while Guyana still follows the ones established in the 1899 arbitration award. In 2015,

ExxonMobil discovered a huge oil reserve and in December of 2023, Venezuela held a referendum to support their claim that the region historically belongs to them, threatening Guyana's territorial integrity (Rios, M., 2025). Guyana has taken the case to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to validate the borders established in 1899, but Venezuela has denied the ICJ's jurisdiction in the matter. 17 non-self governing territories remain in the decolonization process and many say that the 'sovereignty' of these people are being neglected. This shows how self-determination remains a live issue in post-colonial contexts.

Past UN Actions/Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

The UN's first ever notable action occurred following the rise of post-Cold War independence movements in the 1990s. With tensions between self-determination and territorial integrity rising, the Boutros Boutros-Ghali emphasized new ideals which the international community would adopt. While largely rhetorical, the UN pursued the idea that self-determination was a foundational principle of international law and therefore must be encouraged. Undergoing this, the UN still pushed for peaceful means to ensure the boundaries of existing states. The Security Council approaches became further clearer following the Yugoslav Wars. With the condemnation of unilateral secessionist violence and reaffirmation of the necessity of territorial integrity, the UN demonstrated their stance. While not tangible, the ideologies expressed by the UN acted as a precursor for any actions in the future. At the same time, UN peacekeeping missions also demonstrated the organization's attempts to highlight and condemn severe human rights violations, with missions in Kosovo and East Timor occurring. The UN's recognition through such actions demonstrated a shift towards self-determination becoming a necessity for human security, laying a foundation of ideas that would be carried out in years to come.

As conflicts escalated into the early 2000s, the UN broadened its mechanisms for engagement. The International Court of Justice (ICJ) was introduced into the mainstream international community through its advisory opinion on Kosovo's declaration of independence in 2010. Then, it increasingly grew into a forum for addressing disputes, which supplemented the UN in large-scale international discussions and decisions. The ICJ concluded that Kosovo's declaration did not violate international law, but its ruling was stopped short due to belief that it was deliberately avoidant on broader issues surrounding Kosovo, thus reaffirming the UN's stance on a more ideological level. Reaffirming its historical stance, the UN General Assembly continued to

push for peaceful negotiations and non-violent pressures to propagate efforts for self-determination. In the cases of Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Western Sahara, these efforts became clear. The Human Rights Council also became prominent in such discussions as unresolved self-determination claims were tied to systemic rights violations, framing the issue as not only territorial but deeply linked to political marginalization, showcasing how these issues expanded further into greater depths.

Following this, by the mid 2010s, the UN increasingly recognized the growing tensions between self-determination and territorial integrity. With these conflicts growing further and thus intertwining themselves with broader geopolitical disputes, the UN began greater efforts to respond as an international force. The Security Council's response to Crimea's annexation in 2014 exemplified such efforts. The Council outright condemned the referendum as illegitimate, further citing the necessity to protect Ukraine's territorial integrity. While vetoes prevented binding actions, the UN General Assembly was still able to adopt Resolution 68/262 which affirmed Ukraine's internationally recognized borders. This demonstrated a trend within the international community with UN assistance encouraging dialogue rather than unilateral declarations. These actions reflect the growing efforts to prevent self-determination claims becoming geopolitical tools, further reinforcing the need for legal clarity and peaceful negotiations from the UN's point of view.

Recent years have shown further development for these approaches as more movements such as those in Catalonia and New Caledonia have brought attention to global implications of self-determination. With the UN's continuous supervision over referendums and efforts continuing and the HRC's monitoring of concerning states, the UN has underscored its stance. By 2023 and 2024, the UN's continued involvement in mediation efforts, especially through special envoys and regional dialogues demonstrated its commitment to balance

sovereignty with democratic aspirations. Their contributions to the ongoing struggles is important to recognize for future international negotiations.

POSITION OF MAJOR BLOCS

Russia

The Russian Federation has boldly claimed its stance of defending the principle of territorial integrity. However, its stance gains a level of nuance as Russia simultaneously supports the safeguarding of “rightful aspirations” of populations that it has deemed culturally or historically linked to Russia, the most contemporary example being Russia’s conflict with territorial claims to Ukraine. The Russian delegation must recognize that Western attempts to shape regional outcomes infringe on what Moscow views as its sphere of influence, all the while rejecting accusations of orchestrating separatist movements. Making sure to recognize that Russia has already repeatedly and publicly emphasized the protection of Russian-speaking-minorities (such as those situated in Crimea, Donetsk, and Luhansk), the delegation may find it beneficial to justify its involvement as a defense for self-determination, standing in opposition to certain hostile or illegitimate governments. Moreover, the Russian delegation may argue against critics that unilateral declarations of independence must be evaluated through a “context-specific” lens, disregarding historical grievances, and better incorporating the narratives Moscow has publicly upheld. Additionally, Russia currently situates itself as the protector of oppressed communities and a defender for multipolarity in the international landscape, yet it still endures sanctions and diplomatic isolation. The delegate therefore holds a strategic and influential role within this debate, acting as the representative of an increasingly scrutinized actor who still maintains immense power to shape the political scene. In fact, through Russia’s influence not only global influence but regional dynamics could be shaped, influencing what self-determination truly means for a variety of populations.

China

The People's Republic of China holds an influential role in the following debate as it maintains that national unity and territorial integrity should be the foundation of a state's stability. The Chinese delegation should take careful notice of this trend and note the pattern of what it should view as “external attempts” to “weaken Chinese sovereignty by encouraging separatist sentiment.” Keeping in mind that China has consistently stressed the “One China Policy ” across all public diplomatic platforms, this delegation should be inclined to justify strong central authority while rejecting any unilateral independence movement. This objective and straightforward stance should form the basis for this delegation’s arguments, using it as a basis for China’s commitment to national security and socio-economic development. Activists and dissident groups can be opposed by such ideologies, as secessionist aspirations are framed as threats to China. Moreover, representing the present administration, the Chinese delegation should take careful note of President Xi Jinping’s insistence that territorial fragmentation is unacceptable under any circumstances. Their discussions therefore must incorporate the same passion which has been undoubtedly present in the political assertions of the Chinese government. The delegation should also take note of the Chinese perspective that sovereignty precedes all other political considerations, as it firmly holds an influential position which could shape the limits of self-determination in the modern international community.

United Kingdom

The United Kingdom's interpretations of self-determination distinguishes the decolonization-era cases and unilateral secession within established states. While critics argue that the UK inconsistently applies these principles themselves especially when it comes to Scotland, Northern Ireland, and the Falkland Islands, the UK staunchly rejects these claims. The British delegation must remain aware of this fact and how its historical stance may influence its current political

actions. Following Brexit, its continued influence on the UK's political stance, and how it correlates with this topic is significant. The UK consistently supports territorial integrity in global disputes while still advocating for decolonization. Meant to embody the political stance of the current government, the UK delegation must highlight the distinction between democratic consultation and unilateral action. In its stance, the idea that self-determination must operate within rule-of-law frameworks must be emphasized. Representing a state continuing to navigate its own internal and external pressures, the delegation holds a delicate position where a balance between criticisms and collaboration must be maintained. Keeping in mind that the UK has pushed for consent-based processes in its own legally structured referendums, these can act as a backbone for the possible solutions in resolutions.

Iraq

National unity and protection of internationally recognized borders stand at the forefront of Prime Minister Mohammed Shia' Al-Sudani and the Republic of Iraq's stance on this topic. However, the Iraq delegation must take note of two contrasting perspectives present in its region, one fueled by contemporary notions and the other by historical expectations. The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) advocates for self-determination while Iraq's central government maintains its longstanding position that unilateral attempts to gain independence violate the country's constitutional order. Therefore, representing this delegation takes careful consideration as the Iraqi delegation must remain aligned with the central idea that premature secession would endanger the country as a whole. Iraq's proximity to the Kurdish and its consistent political conflicts which arise from it makes Iraq a prime delegation to demonstrate real-world perspectives on sovereignty and self-determination. Keeping in mind that the 2017 Kurdish independence referendum was deemed illegal, the delegation should incline themselves to justify harsher measures in an attempt to prevent territorial fragmentation. Laying domestic stability as a central area of



concern, the delegation should use Iraq's national instability and civil unrest as a backdrop during international debates.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Description
Treaty of Westphalia 1648	<p>The most powerful European kings, emperors and leaders of the time united to sign the Treaty of Westphalia: a series of peace agreements that ended the Thirty Year War within the Roman Empire and the Eighty Year War between Spain and the Dutch.</p> <p>This treaty laid the foundation for the modern international system of sovereign states and for the concept of territorial integrity.</p>
The Enlightenment 18th - 19th Century	<p>With the political and philosophical Enlightenment movements, the ideals of individual liberty, natural rights and governance by consent spread throughout Europe. This reshaped western political values to become more centered on the people's satisfaction with their government.</p>
The American Revolution 1775-1783	<p>As the United States fought for independence from the British, the idea that colonial states had the right to be independent from their colonizer was solidified. This emphasized the idea that people were allowed to determine their own nationality.</p>
The French Revolution 1789-1799	<p>In monarchical France, resentment towards privileged elites accumulated throughout generations until the spike in social inequality and poverty created a climax that led to the French Revolution: overthrowing the French king and the replacement of an absolutist</p>

	<p>monarchy by a democratic republic. This reinforced the idea that people had the right to choose their own government.</p>
<p>The End of WWI 1918</p>	<p>After the first global war in history, the American President Woodrow Wilson created his 14 Point statements of principles for peace. One of the basis of his concepts was the right to self-determination, which he granted specifically to Austro-Hungary. However, the European Allies limited the implementation of these ideals in favor of their national interests.</p>
<p>Treaty of Versailles 1919</p>	<p>As all of the war guilt was placed upon Germany, its territory was shattered apart without asking for the people's consent. Alsace-Lorraine was given to France, Eupen and Malmedy to Belgium, the "Polish Corridor" to Poland, Hultschin to Czechoslovakia and the Saar Basin and Danzig to the League of Nations. All of this was done without plebiscite and violated the peoples' right to self-determination.</p>
<p>Selective Application of Self-Determination Between WWI and WWII</p>	<p>In the period between the two world wars, the geopolitical scenario of the Eurasian continent changed completely: empires fell and borders were redrawn. However, Wilson's proposition of self-determination was only applied to some regions, while others were taken advantage of by those in power. European states such as Finland, Latvia, Poland, and Czechoslovakia gained independence, but middle eastern regions including</p>

	Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine remained under foreign control.
Post WWII Decolonization Period	After WWII, a period of decolonization from European countries began. These include the Indian independence from the UK (1947), Pakistani independence (1947), Sri Lankan independence (1948), Vietnamese independence (1945), Laos Independence (1953), Cambodian Independence (1953), Philippines Independence (1946), among other independence movements.
Biafra Secession Attempt (1967 - 1970)	In 1967, the Igbo ethnic group of Eastern Nigeria led a secessionist movement that declared independence of the Republic of Biafra due to ethnic conflicts. This led to a three year long civil war that reinforced the conflict that the clash between territorial integrity and self-determination can cause.
Yugoslav Wars (1991 - 2001)	After constant internal conflict, Yugoslavia began breaking down into multiple different states in 1991. Secessionist movements became the current countries of Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Macedonia. However, the process through which this occurred caused thousands of deaths and displaced millions.
Russo-Ukrainian War (2022 - present)	As a way to justify the annexation of Crimea, Russia utilized the principle of self-determination, claiming that Crimeans wish to be a part of Russia. However, a large part of the international community reaffirms Ukrainian

	<p>territorial integrity. This led to the current war between Russia and Ukraine, which caused over 1 million casualties.</p>
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DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Self-determination

The right of a group to decide how they will be governed and to choose their own political status. These choices on if they have independence, autonomy or to remain part of a state, should be made with no outside pressure.

Territorial Integrity

The principle that a nation's borders must not be changed by force. This means that other states cannot invade or take land from them, and the country has the right to protect its territory as it is.

Secession

An attempt by part of a state to withdraw and establish a new sovereign identity. It involves separating politically and legally from its original state, usually seeking recognition from the international community. Secessionist movements are usually driven by ethnic, cultural or historical identity or when the group believes that the central government does not represent their interests.

International Court of Justice (ICJ)

This is the principle judicial organ of the United Nations which is responsible for hearing cases brought only by countries on territorial disputes, violation of treaties, maritime borders amongst other similar cases. It was established in 1945 by the UN Charter and is located in The Hague, a city in the Netherlands. It is also commonly known as the "World Court".

The Fourteen Points

The Fourteen Points were a set of principles proposed by the US President Woodrow Wilson in 1918, at the end of World War I, to outline a plan for lasting international peace and preventing future wars. Some of the points introduced

self-determination as an international principle and therefore were key in shaping the political systems the world has today.

FURTHER RESEARCH

1. What is Self-Determination? | The most misunderstood idea in International Relations:

<https://youtu.be/vkhWoFirV7A?si=QhyTUbdBpewfugPq>

2. Kashmir's Fight for Self-Determination and Azadi Continues:

<https://wfmcanada.org/blogs/news/kashmir-s-fight-for-self-determination-and-a-zadi-continues>

3. Secessionists Movements and their Implications for Security in Africa: The Case of Southern Cameroons:

<https://www.accord.org.za/publication/secessionists-movements-and-their-implications-for-security-in-africa-the-case-of-southern-cameroons/>

4. New Perspectives on Self-Determination, Sovereignty and the State with William Wohlforth (PrincetonLISD):

<https://youtu.be/xLviSqakk5s?si=wTpZSQag-DfqHadC>

5. A report on secessionist movements in Africa and human rights violations:

<https://www.cmi.no/publications/file/8152-cabinda-separatism-and-human-rights-violations.pdf>

6. From Cameroon to Nigeria, separatist conflicts keep children out of school:

<https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2025/1/23/from-cameroon-to-nigeria-separatist-conflicts-keep-children-out-of-school>

7. Beyond Catalonia: pro-independence movements in Europe:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/ng-interactive/2017/oct/27/beyond-catalonia-pro-independence-movements-in-europe-map>

8. World map with separatist movements:

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:World_map_with_separatist_movement_s.png

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- ❖ To what extent does your delegation believe in the legal boundaries between self-determination and territorial integrity, in such cases which principles does it prioritize to most?
- ❖ How does your delegation believe that the international community should respond in mediating on conflicts where secession, autonomy movements, or territorial disputes arise?
- ❖ To what extent is your delegation's stance on this issue influenced by its historical actions, possibly disputed territories, or minority groups situated in the country?
- ❖ Which mechanisms (e.g. referendums, autonomy agreements, international peacekeeping operations, etc) does your delegation support regarding this topic, and in that respect, which does it oppose?

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