



**APQSA:** Advisory Panel on the Question of South America

**Student Officer:** Umut Çağlar Can

**Issue:** Eliminating the possibility of armed conflict between Venezuela and Guyana

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Committee: Advisory Panel on the Question of South America (APQSA)  
Issue: Eliminating the possibility of armed conflict between Venezuela and Guyana  
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## I. Introduction

The possibility of armed conflict between Venezuela and Guyana is mostly centered around the territorial dispute between the two countries over the Essequibo region of modern-day western Guyana. The Essequibo region holds up more than 2/3rds of Guyana's sovereign territory and has been internationally awarded for its economically precious underground resources. Also, according to international maritime laws, the region allows access to economically valuable exclusive sea zones for the owner state as the maritime region has a large chunk of the world's crude oil reserves that are actively being explored. The dispute dates its origins to colonial conflicts between the Spanish colony of Venezuela and the British/Dutch colony of Guyana before the very independence of either state.



Map 1: The disputed claims over Essequibo and Guyanese EEZs.

Since then, multiple international efforts to find a stable and peaceful solution to the conflict have failed, and the issue remains one of the only disputes in South American history to persist to the modern day. Although the conflict mostly stayed at a level where it did not actively threaten international peace through military conflict, recent events of the 21st century have made the region more than just valuable to both countries in terms of political, economic, and strategic regards, which only further intensified the conflict between the two South American oil giants. Also, during the last few decades, Venezuela has been going through major economic and political crises that have made it difficult for the international community to propose plausible solutions. These recent developments also made the international community more involved in the conflict, which had largely stayed as a two-nation conflict until the modern day. Presently, in addition to Venezuela and Guyana, international powers that have secured interests over the region both politically and economically, such as the USA, China, and Russia, have shown signs of support for individual sides to earn incentives, or to protect their existing interests. While this conflict continued as it was mostly



throughout the 2000s and 2010s, on the 3rd of December 2023, the government of Venezuela under the regime of Nicolás Maduro conducted a consultative referendum where the Venezuelan people, without the inclusion of the people who live in Essequibo, were asked whether if the Venezuelan government should move into Essequibo to officially acquire it and establish it as a state of Venezuela like any other. The turnout of the election was 99.89% in favor of the motion, however, the legitimacy of the election has been considered to be faulty. This, along with the newfound economic risk the potential war could cause the global economy centered around the trade of oil, has only made the conflict even more worrying than it already was, while also making it essential for the international community to propose possible solutions to the conflict that could satisfy both sides while making it certain that global peace and economic prosperity remains intact. In the last two centuries, international mediatory organs, including the United Nations Special Political and Decolonization Committee (UNSPDC,) the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA,) and perhaps most importantly, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) have made efforts to tackle the issue but have unfortunately failed to finalize feasible solutions to the matter. Thus, it has fallen to the Advisory Panel under the Secretary General of the United Nations to gather experts on the topic that could, in buoyancy, finally resolve the matter permanently.

## II. Involved Countries and Organizations

### Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

Venezuela is perhaps the most important player in the conflict right now. The reason for that is that Venezuela currently holds the decisive decision on realizing its claims and annexing Essequibo through military means, or holding off until international arbitration solves the issue. This very question of Venezuela's motives is the reason for the resurgence of international worry over the possibility of disruption to global economic and political stability. To understand the role of Venezuela in the conflict, experts must understand the internal and external position of Venezuela both economically and politically, as it is the driving factor that influences its motives. Furthermore, when delving deeper into the background of Venezuela's claims on Essequibo, the history of the issue dating back to the colonization of South America should also be given attention.

Historically, since its foundation in 1835, Venezuela has had a troubling history with its eastern neighbor. At first, the western Guyanese lands were owned by the British Empire, which led to one of Venezuela's earliest disputes with other countries in South America where neither side could propose a viable solution that could be accepted by both sides. Although other advances like the Schomburgk Line were made, mainly the two advances to solve the issue, which are the Paris Arbitral Award of 1899, and the Geneva Agreement of 1966, should be best understood as they lay the basis for the disagreement. In 1899,



after the failure of previous attempts, an effort by both sides was made. The sides; Venezuela (represented by the USA due to a severance of relations with Britain, Britain, and Russia as a jurist (as a proposed neutral state) gathered in Paris to finalize a solution to the dispute. The result of the advance was that around 90% of the disputed territory, which included the valuable gold mines and forestry, was awarded to Britain. Although Venezuela very quickly opposed the result, it abided by it until 1946 when it re-established its claims, claiming that the award could not be considered legitimate as there was an alleged political deal between Russia and the UK. Later in 1966, just around the time when Guyana received its independence, both sides gathered in Geneva and agreed to work together to find a solution to the issue. During this agreement, Venezuela proposed its reasoning behind the invalidity of the Paris Award, which was entertained, but neither accepted nor rejected, by the organ. Venezuela believed that the agreement would legitimize its claims and grant the land back to itself, however, since the agreement had no enforcing rule, and didn't come to any conclusion, the land remained under the control of Guyana. Later in the 20th century, the topic was brought up to the UNGA, and Venezuela argued its case once more with no solutions. In 2008, Venezuela made an official change to its flag where it added another star that would represent the Guyana province, which is an exemplary show of motivation to legitimize its claim. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, in 2017, the then Secretary General of the UN, António Guterres referred the case to the ICJ. Although the case has not been fully closed, Venezuela argued that the ICJ had no jurisdiction over the case, and thus would not recognize whatever it would impose. This was later counter argued by the ICJ but Venezuela continued to refuse to accept the ICJ ruling. The last event in the chain of events was the Venezuelan Consultative Referendum of 2023 where the Maduro government made an internal referendum asking 5 questions. Two of those questions were based on whether the ICJ held jurisdiction and whether Venezuela should officially integrate the Guyana region, including Essequibo, as a state of its own. Both questions were given a 99.89% "yes" which would mean that Venezuela now officially did not recognize the ICJ to be judicatory, and Venezuela was rightful to annex Essequibo permanently.

It is also important to note the effect of the internal state of Venezuela on the matter. Venezuela, which is a state that owns the largest proven oil reserves in the world, is expected to be rich, however, that could not be further from the case. Since 2010, Venezuela has been suffering one of the world's largest economic crises around the world, including problems like hyperinflation, international sanctioning, massive rates of unemployment, and raging poverty with emigration as a direct result. At the moment, Venezuela has an inflation of about 330%. Although many reasons can be attributed to this result, mainly, all of them can be linked to the reign of Nicolás Maduro. During his reign, rampant corruption, and economic mismanagement of the oil-dependent economy led to a series of events ending up with hyperinflation and an emigration crisis. This was further amplified by the sanctions imposed on Venezuela by key trade powers like the US, UK, the EU, and others on specific military and government personnel, as well as an outright sanction by the US that disallowed Venezuela to access US markets, where it mostly would sell its oil, which





was imposed due to the call of human rights abuses made by the Maduro government. This is rather important as the referendum in 2023 was called by many international relations experts to be a cover made by Maduro to keep the public away from opposing him. Also, another factor that may have influenced the choice to make the referendum could be linked to the Russo-Ukrainian War of 2022 where some experts also consider the diversion of US attention to Europe to be a possible motive for Maduro's advanced claim. Lastly, it is also worth noting that Venezuela, although suffering from economic crises, still has a larger and more effective army than Guyana.

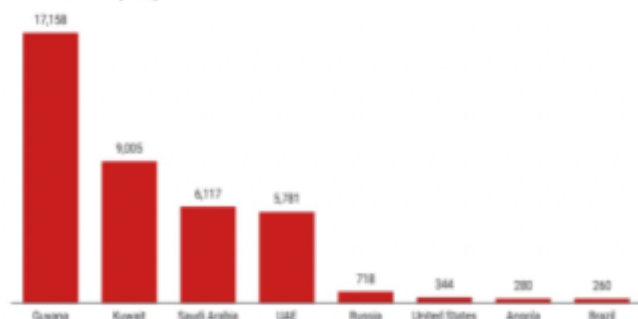
## Co-operative Republic of Guyana

The Co-operative Republic of Guyana, more commonly referred to as Guyana is the current controller of the Essequibo region. Since its foundation in 1966, Guyana remained relatively poor until the modern day. This was because, under the geographical barrier of being located in a tropical climate, the country was not able to industrialize like other countries. It instead mostly kept its economy running through the export of gold located in the Essequibo region. However, after the discovery of massive amounts of crude oil reserves in 2015, Guyana saw a massive boost in its economic prosperity. In 2015, the annual

Gross Domestic Product of Guyana was about 4.30 billion dollars, however, the massive economic surge led it to become about quadruple of what that was, being 16.9 billion dollars at the moment. It is currently the holder of the title of 18th global most proven oil reserves. Although this rank might not seem as important, it is critical to understand that Guyana is much smaller in size than any other country on the list by a large amount. This can be shown

Top countries with highest oil reserves in 2023

Barrels of crude oil per capita



Figures rounded to nearest whole numbers

Chart: BusinessDay - Source: RYSTAD ENERGY - Created with Datawrapper

Graph 1: World oil per capita ranking measured by barrels of crude oil.

by how Guyana currently holds the first title in per capita oil reserves around the world, it has much larger assets than well-known oil giants like Iran or Saudi Arabia. A very large amount of these oil reserves are located in the exclusive economic zone of Guyana, near the shore of the Essequibo region. Even more, these oil reserves are explored with the cooperation of the Guyanese government with international corporations like ExxonMobil, Hess Corporation, and CNOOC Limited, which has significantly boosted the economic investments into newly discovered assets. This means that the very asset that has transformed the country from a poor equatorial country to a large oil-rich giant in South America is owed to its owning of the Essequibo region.



As expected, Guyana, since its foundation, has been aiming to keep this region to itself and secure it through international backing. Since its independence from Britain in 1966, which was also the same year the Geneva Agreement was signed, Guyana has made it clear to both Venezuela and the world that it will do all it can to keep its control over Essequibo entirely. To achieve this, Guyana has made efforts both internationally and domestically. Firstly, in the Geneva Agreement of 1966, Guyana was fine with working with a mediatory organ and Venezuela to solve the issue directly, it believed that such an organ could finally disprove Venezuela's claims and permanently close the issue. However, no solution could be found. So, Guyana started making efforts to involve the United Nations in the matter, who, in their opinion, could finalize a solution. This started with the matter being carried to the UNGA, where the topic remained on hold until the 21st century when the Secretary General of the time, António Guterres referred the case to the ICJ. In the ICJ, Guyana aimed to convince the court that Venezuela's claim over there being a political collaboration between the UK and Russia in the Paris Award was false and that the ICJ had the highest jurisdiction over the matter to take the case. This also ended up being for close to nothing since Venezuela simply refused to accept ICJ jurisdiction over the case.

During this time, most likely fearing a total failure of the UN to diplomatically solve the issue, Venezuela has turned to international diplomacy with other Great Powers to at least protect the status quo, or in the best case, gain full ownership over the disputed territory. Already being protected by the USA, Guyana also made international efforts to ally with other powers like Brazil, the UK, and even China. At the moment, Guyana needs such international aid as it simply does not possess the military might to challenge a possible Venezuelan invasion. Until now, Guyana has managed to earn international military and political support from the UK, USA, and Ukraine. It has also been noted by other powers like the EU or India that they would make efforts to continue the peace, which could be a guarantee for Guyana in case of aggression by Venezuela. In addition, other international bodies like the Commonwealth of Nations, and the Caribbean Community have also shown support for Guyana. Lastly, it is also arguable that, by allowing for corporate oil exploration, Guyana aims to gain the support of countries like China and France. ,

## The United States of America

Being essentially the largest military power in the world, along with having a history of directly intervening in South American events, the USA is the very country that the world often looks at when a conflict like the one on the agenda occurs. Here, the situation is no different. The USA has played a very critical role in the establishment of a possible solution to the matter until now. It has taken roles to represent Venezuela in important events like the Paris Awards of 1899 and also has taken diplomatic steps in the United Nations altogether to combine the sides to solve the issue. Over the last 2 decades, however, the USA, who had taken a natural approach to the topic until then, slowly started to back Guyana in the matter. There are a few reasons why this is so. Firstly, it is worth noting that during the internal socioeconomic crisis



Map 2: Countries that recognised the 2024 Venezuelan elections as legitimate, and Maduro as the victor.

of Venezuela, the US was very supportive of whoever opposed the Maduro regime, and strongly advocated for a transition from the undemocratic current regime to a democratic one in 2020. When the Maduro regime refused such proposals and, according to the USA, made “illegitimate” elections to continue his rule, the USA responded heavily. While also stating that this was made due to

the breaches of human rights, the USA imposed sanctions on Venezuela in 2017 under the Trump regime. The sanctions were lifted temporarily before the 2024 regime with a proposal to lift them permanently if political prisoners get released and the 2024 election achieves a democratic standard. The Biden regime reimposed the sanctions later considering the agreement to have failed.

Currently, the USA is actively protecting Guyana as stated by the US deputy national security advisor Jon Finer: *“That cooperation is fundamentally defensive in nature and grounded in our desire for Guyana to be able to defend its territorial integrity against any possible threats.”* This is mainly due to a few reasons. Firstly, the US has corporations like ExxonMobile that are actively participating in the oil search and extraction process in collaboration with Guyana. If Venezuela was to invade, this would be put in danger. Additionally, the Venezuelan government had, in recent years, shown alignment with Russia and China, which would be a security problem for the US as a Sino-Russian ally gaining valuable land would allow them to get entrenched in South America.

### People’s Republic of China

The PRC follows a similar approach to the topic as the USA. China, standing as the second-largest economic power in the world when it comes to annual GDP, aims to gain economic incentives and alliances in South America and Guyana in particular. In the last few decades, China has taken a cooperative approach to gain economic influence around the world, which essentially means that it uses its corporations to gain strategic deals with emerging economies, where Guyana is a prime example. In this case, both after and before the crude oil discovery in 2015, China has taken a very close approach to the emerging Guyanese Economy. Although it already had corporations like China Harbour Engineering Corporation (CHEC) or the Beijing Construction Group working to influence the Guyanese mineral market, the biggest approach China had taken until the present day was with the China National Offshore Oil Company



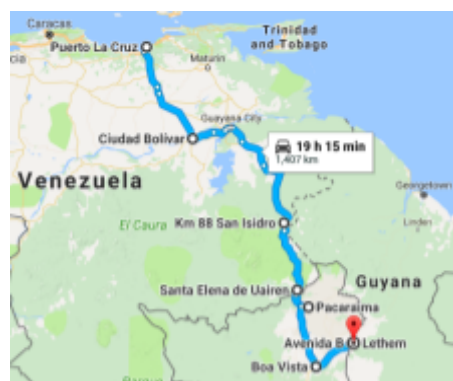
(CNOOC) along with other international companies like ExxonMobile taking direct role in the oil search and extraction process in the EEZ of Guyana granted through Essequibo. Although it appears as though China is a close ally of Guyana, this is far from the case. China has also very strong connections with the Maduro government and was one of the first countries to celebrate him after the shaky 2024 election. Furthermore, China has also, in the last few decades, sold massive amounts of military equipment to Venezuela. China also pursues similar cooperative approaches to Venezuelan oil reserves, however, it still does not hesitate to trade with its enemy, Guyana. In this issue, having both political and economic connections and strongholds over both sides, China would simply prefer to keep the status quo and hurt neither side, which in return would grant it the highest amount of influence it can gain.

### The United Kingdom

The approach of the United Kingdom is similar but in comparison less extensive than the approach of the USA. The United Kingdom has been one of the most consistent allies of Guyana since its independence. The UK and Guyana are tied to each other through bilateral treaties and alliances like the Commonwealth of Nations. The UK is also one of the countries that have sanctioned Venezuela during the human rights violation allegations, which have stayed persistent until the present day. It has, similar to the USA, shown military support to Guyana after the 2023 referendum. On a visit by the British Minister for the Americas, David Rutley, stated: *"I am in Guyana, a fellow Commonwealth member, to offer the UK's unequivocal backing to our Guyanese friends."* He also stated on the same visit: *"The border issue has been settled for over 120 years. Sovereign borders must be respected wherever they are in the world."*

### Federative Republic of Brazil

The relationship between Brazil and the topic at hand comes from its geographical location. Brazil, being the largest South American country, which also possesses the largest military in the region, not including France, holds a leadership role in protecting the politically safe environment and all the countries in it. Furthermore, Brazil also owns about 60% of the Amazon region and conflict around the region would surely come to hurt them in the long run as well. However, the main reason why Brazil is an important state in the matter comes down to another factor. The factor that is being mentioned is the fact that the only paved road from which the Venezuelan military can attack the Guyanese goes through the sovereign territory of Brazil. After 2023, when Venezuela first started increasing its military might in the region, Brazil also deployed a rather large amount of troops on its border with Venezuela, perhaps as a warning sign. Until now, Venezuela has not made efforts to increase its wartime usable infrastructure around



Map 3: A visual demonstration of the main road between Venezuela and Guyana.





the border, meaning that Brazil is unintentionally dragged into the conflict, where to keep the peace, it finds itself as an ally of Guyanese sovereignty.

### III. Focused Overview of the Issue

#### 1. Essequibo: Geography and Resources

To understand the very conflict about Essequibo, one should know why Essequibo holds such high value in the first place. The Essequibo region is located in the northeastern part of South America, it is to the west of the Essequibo River, and it borders an extension of the Atlantic Ocean. The region mostly consists of tropical forests, but there can also be found hinterlands, low plains, and hills. The biodiversity in the region is truly extensive. The living environment in Essequibo benefits from the variety of natural habitats and an equatorial climate. However, the region does not have a large population, even though it has around 60% of Guyana's controlled territory, it only accounts for 12.5% of Guyana's total population. This population, however, is also special. Due to its natural distance from the rest of the world, the people living in Essequibo have a rich linguistic and cultural heritage that is being actively observed by many international organizations. This is mainly due to the thick forestry and hot air conditions that make living very difficult for humans. The Essequibo River, which the region takes its name from, is also a major source of biodiversity for all of North Eastern South America. The river rises from the Acaraí Mountains and flows down for more than 1000 kilometers. The Essequibo River is also home to more than 58 endemic species. This makes it important to protect these natural habitats, and a potential conflict between the powers would be one of the largest potential risks.

Although the region is truly rich in its natural habitats, it is not valued due to these reasons. Unlike many other equatorial regions, Guyana also has very rich natural underground resources, and even more in its maritime counterparts that are under the EEZ of Guyana, according to UN Maritime Laws. During the colonial period, the region was valued for its underground mining and forestry resources. The source of timber, although not as relevant now, was one of the few valuable resources in Essequibo back then. During that era, the British and Dutch colonizers would regularly partake in deforestation campaigns. Another resource, which was perhaps the most valuable until the oil discovery offshore, was gold and diamond. Until the 21st century, the main exports of British Guyana and Guyana remained centered around these two resources. Similarly, first Spain, and then Venezuela, wanted to acquire this territory to also financially boost their emerging economies. Now getting back to the modern day, Essequibo, and consequently its maritime territories designated under the UN maritime laws, is one of the most valuable territories on earth. This is, as mentioned, due to the significant amount of crude oil discovered offshore by Guyana and collaborative international corporations like ExxonMobile in 2015. This, even if it started in 2015, continued until the modern day. Still, companies like CNOOC and ExxonMobile along with the Guyanese government are



actively discovering new oil assets to this day. This discovery, as said before, made Guyana the largest per capita crude oil reserve owner in the world, surpassing giants like Kuwait, Bahrain, and Qatar.

Even more, this type of crude is particularly valuable too. Unlike the reserves in Venezuela, the oil reserves found in the EEZ of Guyana, which is again a part of Essequibo as well, are very pure and light. Oil refineries that are responsible for converting crude oil into petroleum require less energy to convert the oil found in Guyana than in other countries. For comparison, the type of oil found in Guyana is similar to the type of oil found in Saudi Arabia and Gulf countries. Due to the small amount of energy required, along with the lack of expensive refining material needed, the oil in Guyana is essentially universally acceptable in refining. This is far from the case for Venezuela's oil reserves. Although Venezuela has the largest discovered oil reserves in the world, the type of oil found there is heavy and impure, and thus requires special refining equipment. This special refining equipment is mostly found in the Midwest and Louisiana regions of the United States. These refineries are currently under the ownership of Petr leos de Venezuela, S.A (or PDVSA for short,) which is the governmental corporation of Venezuela that centralizes oil production. Although it might appear as though the US has no power over the PDVSA refineries, their very location in the USA makes them a possible target in case of an all-out sanction or economic blockade.

## 2. Historical Context and the Current Situation

Although the details have mostly been covered in the "Involved Countries and Organizations" part, it is still important to reiterate the timeline of events in an objective manner.

The conflict first arose when the Spanish colonizers reached the northern ends of South America while the Dutch colonizers reached modern-day Guyana. However at the time nobody fully claimed the land, and it was noticed by both sides that the land had a valuable gold mine. After the discovery, Spanish colonizers in Venezuela claimed Essequibo but did not bother to send any official personnel to assert their claims, and the land remained under the control of the Dutch colonists. During the 18th and 19th centuries, when some South American countries including Venezuela gained their independence through massive revolts, the land largely remained under Dutch control until it was ceded to the British due to a European war. From then on, until 1966, the land remained under British control. After the independence of Venezuela, the newfound state very quickly became aggressive towards its claim in Essequibo. It argued that due to how Spain had initially made a claim, the control of the land by the British was illegal. Since Venezuela faced its problems, it could not wage a military conflict against the UK, the dominant power back then. In 1899, after years of arguing with no promising results, the UK and Venezuela (then represented by the US) gathered to finalize the border in the Paris Arbitral Awards. In the tribunal, representatives from the UK, USA, and Russia (as a proposed neutral state) gathered to finalize the dispute with jurists from the same states. The tribunal awarded 90% of the contested land to the United Kingdom, while only 10% was left to Venezuela. The final



border was very similar to what the Guyanese government claims right now. Even though Venezuela was upset with the result, it had no fundamental backing to prove its claim once more, so it abided by the results. This was the case until 1962, when Venezuela revived its claim over Essequibo after being altered by Mallet-Prevost Memorandum that a possible collusion between the British and Russian jurists led to a faulty result. For 4 years this claim was not responded to by Britain.

In 1966, just around the time when Guyana was to gain independence, Britain and Venezuela agreed to make at least diplomatic steps to solve the issue under the United Nation's guidance. So, the Geneva Agreement (signed by Guyana after its independence) was signed between the two states. The agreement stated that the two countries would work in unison to achieve a peaceful solution either through mutual diplomacy or under the guidance of a higher political organization, which the UN was at reference. During the agreement, the claim regarding the collusion in 1899 by Venezuela was recognised but was not backed or opposed. The agreement was considered a success by both sides, as Venezuela believed it to be a step in gaining legitimacy, while Guyana/Britain believed that the agreement would prove the claims of illegitimacy. After this, however, no further steps were taken to propose viable solutions. The topic remained the same for a very long time. It was discussed in a few General Assembly meetings but again the discussions and the results were not promising. In 2006, Venezuela made an official change to its flag, adding an 8th star that was to represent the state of Essequibo, which was called the "Zone in Reclamation" until then. So, in December 2017, the then-Secretary General António Guterres referred the case to the International Court of Justice. Which was 2 years after the oil discovery in 2015.

After 2017, the topic became more relevant as Venezuela increased its pressure on Essequibo while the oil discoveries made the land more and more valuable for the global community. The ICJ case, however, was shaky. The case was accepted in 2018 by the ICJ when Guyana officially requested ICJ to open the case, deciding that according to Guterres's proposal, no diplomacy could solve the issue. Later that same year, Venezuela opposed the ICJ case, arguing that the ICJ had no jurisdiction to take the case. Not minding the claim by Venezuela Guyana proposed its claims for the legitimacy of the 1899 Paris Arbitral Awards, which was recognized but neither accepted nor rejected by the court. After a delay in 2020 that only accelerated the situation, the ICJ ruled that it had jurisdiction to take over the case in 2023. Later in 2023, Venezuela conducted its infamous National Consultative Referendum where 5 main questions were raised to the general populace, without the inclusion of the Essequibo population:

1. Do you agree to reject by all means under the law, the boundary line fraudulently imposed by the arbitration decision of Paris of 1899 that is meant to dispossess us of our Guayana Esequiba?
2. Do you support the Geneva Accord of 1966 as the only valid legal instrument that can reach a practical and satisfactory solution for Venezuela and Guyana in terms of the controversy over the territory of Guayana Esequiba?



3. Do you agree with Venezuela's historical position of not recognizing the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice in resolving the territorial controversy over Guayana Esequiba?
4. Do you agree to oppose by all means under the law, Guyana's attempts to unilaterally manage a maritime area, yet to be delimited, in an illegal manner and violation of international law?
5. Do you agree with the creation of the state of Guyana Esequiba and an accelerated plan to integrate the current and future population of that territory including, among other acts, the provision of citizenship and Venezuelan identification cards, according to the Geneva Agreement and international law, thus incorporating the aforementioned state into the territorial map of Venezuela?

All of these questions received a total of over 99.89% "YES" votes. The legitimacy of the referendum was opposed and critiqued, however, all of the questions with the 5th one at the center, alerted the world of a possible invasion by Venezuela. Which brings the topic to today.

### 3. International Escalation and Internal Crisis

As said earlier, the topic right is one of the largest territorial crises all around the world. With the discovery of valuable oil that led to a global advance in South American trade, the topic became a global concern in both economic and political aspects. Because of this, many international powers intervened in the dispute, supporting the sides to gain a stronghold over South American trade and overall global influence. The main countries mentioned here were the PRC, Russia, the USA, and the UK. These countries, alarmed by a possibility of conflict that could contradict their interests, became more and more involved with the issue, becoming way more open with their support for sides.

In this duality, Venezuela, which had been distanced by the Western powers due to alleged violation of human rights, was already suffering a massive socio economic crisis. Venezuela, although it has already been explored in the previous sections, has been facing one of the worst economic crises in human history, similar in extent to the impact of the Great Depression in the USA. While this was continuing, Venezuela, under the Chavez and Maduro regimes, was called out internationally for being dictatorial and oppressive. During this era, many political opponents were imprisoned, gang violence rose, alleged human rights violations occurred, censorship became regular, and elections always provided questionable results. All of these factors contributed to Venezuela becoming distanced from the Western Powers, who decided to sanction individual members of the government and the military. While this was the case for most European Union countries including Britain, Canada, and Mexico, the USA also made moves to limit Venezuela's access to American trade markets, which was problematic as most of the Venezuelan oil trade is conducted with the USA. During this Western alienation phase, Venezuela turned to other powers like Russia and China and allied with them. China and Russia also provided Venezuela with military equipment and trade deals to





keep the flow of oil. Russian and Chinese companies were granted access to Venezuela's rich oil reserves to refine them.

While this was happening Guyana also sought international support for its defense, being a nation with a very minor military force. It sought to gain support from Western Powers that had severed their relations with Venezuela, while also staying as a close ally of other powers like China. Guyana managed to gain military and vocal support from the UK and USA while many other countries and organizations like the Caribbean Community, the Commonwealth of Nations, Canada, Mexico, India, Ukraine and others showed verbal support only. Due to the geographical proximity it had to the conflict, countries like Brazil also announced that they would move to secure the region's safety through military means if necessary. While Guyana has secured good ties with such countries, it has also developed economic relations with others, like China. The Guyanese oil reserves are being explored and extracted through the collaborative work of not just Guyanese companies, but international corporations. Many companies from various countries like ExxonMobile from the USA and CNOOC from China are actively working together to extract and open the world to new valuable oil reserves. There is also the fear of the conflict spreading to the rest of the environmentally endemic Amazonian lands, which are mostly sovereign Brazilian territory. The UN, most countries, and organizations want to make sure that the conflict never hurts the local environment as it is very diverse. The topic is rather difficult to solve as almost every country involved has different interests that they are trying to upkeep. However, the goal of ensuring that no military conflict ever actually occurs is the overall goal of every involved party, including even Venezuela.

#### IV. Key Vocabulary

**Arbitration:** A procedure in which a dispute is submitted, by agreement of the parties, to one or more arbitrators who make a binding decision on the dispute.

**Exclusive Economic Zone:** An area of the ocean, generally extending 200 nautical miles (230 miles) beyond a nation's territorial sea, within which a coastal nation has jurisdiction over both living and nonliving resources.

**Crude Oil:** Crude oil is a mixture of comparatively volatile liquid hydrocarbons (compounds composed mainly of hydrogen and carbon), though it also contains some nitrogen, sulfur, and oxygen. Those elements form a large variety of complex molecular structures, some of which cannot be readily identified. Crude oil can be distinguished into different subtypes according to its pureness and its heaviness. Simply put, heavier and less pure amounts of crude oil are less desirable for gasoline production than lighter, purer samples of crude oil. This is because heavier and less pure amounts of crude oil have to go through more extensive refining processes that are more expensive. The only example in this agenda item is that the crude oil reserves in the



EEZ of Guyana are pure and light, while the crude oil reserves in Venezuela are heavy and less pure. So Guyanese oil is more desirable globally.

**Jurisdiction:** The term “jurisdiction” is defined as: “The authority of a sovereign power to govern or legislate.”

**International / Government Corporations:** A corporation is a large company or group of companies authorized to act as a single entity and recognized as such in law. If the corporation works under the influence of the government, it is a government-based corporation. If its economic activities involve inter-border roles, it is an international corporation. The terms are rather vague as there are plenty of other terms that mean the same thing, but for this report, these two terms were the main ones being used.

**Disputed Territory:** A disagreement between two or more states about which state exercises sovereignty over a certain part of territory.

**Referendum:** A referendum is a vote in which all the people in a country or an area are asked to give their opinion about or decide an important political or social question.

**Gross Domestic Product (GPA):** The standard measure of the value added created through the production of goods and services in a country during a certain period, which is usually based on an annual system.

## V. Important Events & Chronology

Date (Day/Month/Year)	Event
1830	Venezuela gains independence from Colombia.
1840	The Schomburgk Line (the first border line between Venezuela and Colombia) is drawn.
3/10/1899	The Paris Arbitral Awards takes place.
1949	The Mallet-Prevost Memorandum is given to the Venezuelan government.
1962	Venezuela revives its claim to the Essequibo region.
12/11/1962	Venezuela presents its claims over the faultiness of the Paris Awards to the UNSPSC in the General Assembly.
17/1/1966	The Geneva Agreement is signed between Venezuela and British Guyana.
26/5/1966	Guyana officially receives independence from Britain.
26/5/1966	Venezuela officially recognizes Guyanese independence but doesn't accept their control over the west of the Essequibo River.



10/1966	Venezuela occupies the Ankoko Islands.
1969	Venezuela supports an uprising in the Essequibo region against Guyana militarily.
1970	Port of Spain Protocol: Suspension of the dispute between the two states for 12 years.
1983	The Port of Spain Protocol expires, and the dispute rages on.
2006	Venezuela adds the 8th star to its flag, representing Essequibo.
2015	Crude oil reserves are found in the EEZ of Guyana.
27/05/2015	Venezuela extends its EEZ claims based on Essequibo in disputed maritime territory.
12/2017	António Guterres refers the case to the ICJ.
29/3/2018	Guyana requests the ICJ to handle the case.
7/2018	Venezuela argues in the ICJ that the ICJ has no jurisdiction over the case.
2020	The ICJ case is postponed due to the global pandemic.
18/09/2020	The USA starts maritime exercises with Guyana.
04/2023	The ICJ declares that it has the jurisdiction to handle the case.
31/10/2023	Guyana alerts the ICJ about a referendum by Venezuela to legitimize its claim over the Essequibo.
29/11/2023	Brazil increases its military presence with Venezuela.
3/12/2023	Venezuela conducts its consultative referendum.

## VI. Past Resolutions and Treaties

### - [The 1899 Paris Arbitral Award](#)

It is the document that was essentially the first mutual effort by both Venezuela and Guyana to settle the conflict. It was created after both sides agreed to resolve their territorial disputes at the Washington Conference. In the award, the Venezuelan delegation was represented by the United States due to a severing of relations between the United Kingdom and Venezuela. The award also included a British delegation, and jurists from the UK, the USA, and Russia, but not from Venezuela. The tribunal ended up awarding about 90% of the disputed territory



to the UK, and the remaining 10% to Venezuela. The awards were accepted for a rather long time until 1962 when Venezuela revived its claim over Essequibo.

- [The 1966 Geneva Agreement](#)

This is the document that was signed by both Venezuela and Britain after Venezuela revived its claims over the disputed territory around the time when Guyana was to be granted independence from Britain. The agreement served as an agreement between the two parties that essentially just made it clear that the parties would reach an agreement through diplomacy, and if needed, international arbitration. The case was carried to the United Nations where Venezuela reaffirmed its claims on the invalidity of the Paris Arbitral Award, and Guyana sought to counter-argue that the award was final and binding. The agreement managed to achieve its goal, however, since it did not have a goal of solving the case entirely, the case was left open for about 5 extra decades. The topic was later brought up in a few general assembly meetings with no result or presentable resolutions from any side, so it is not worth being touched upon.

- [The International Court of Justice Case on the Issue, 1st of December 2023](#)

After no viable solution was found for the conflict, the then Secretary General of the UN, António Guterres referred the case to the ICJ. The court was to accept the case if any side was not to have any other propositions, which they didn't. So, in the March of 2018, the case, upon the wish of Guyana, was opened. The first few rounds were mainly focused on whether the ICJ had jurisdiction over solving the case, and whether the 1899 Paris Awards were final and binding. After a delay due to the global pandemic and a disapproval of the court's jurisdiction of the case by Venezuela, the case remained suspended until 2023, where the question regarding whether the consultative referendum was valid, and what would be done in case Venezuela was to use this referendum to legitimize an attack on Guyana. The court ruled on the 1st of December 2023 that both arguments by both sides were to be entertained, however, no side would ever be awarded the right to exercise sovereign rule over the land until the pending decision becomes finalized.

## VII. Failed Solution Attempts

As seen from above there were mainly 3 exemplified cases by the parties to solve the issue. Out of all of these cases, perhaps the only one that can be considered to have worked is the Geneva Agreement of 1966, where, although small, the goal was achieved. The rest, however, turned out to be all failures that only





provided temporary relief. The Paris Award's failure can be attributed to how the tribunals did not include Venezuelan personnel and were not fully monitored by a trustworthy international body. Other than this exemplary case, all other failures on the international scale are based on previously mentioned geographical, economic, and political issues of both Venezuela and the issue as a whole.

As aforementioned, Venezuela has been sanctioned by multiple Western Hemisphere countries and organizations due to alleged human rights violations under the Maduro regime along with alleged corruptive and dictatorial elements being found within the government bodies. This, along with the very fact that Venezuela is actively going through one of the largest economic crises in the 21st century, rivaling the likes of the American Great Depression in the 1920s has made it particularly difficult for international organs to propose viable solutions to the economic aspects of the issue. In addition, Venezuela owns the largest total crude oil reserves worldwide. This is also particularly important given how any solution that would use methods of distancing Venezuela from the global market would hurt the global market itself in an ineffective way at both the international and inter corporate levels. In addition, this can also be considered a principal reason why the UN could not act decisively in bringing the Venezuelan government to the jurisdiction of the ICJ after they refused to accept it.

Another aspect that has contributed to the lack of proposed solutions is the current political instability in Venezuela. According to many UN trusted organs, the current Maduro regime in Venezuela, being founded on corruption and suppressive elements, makes it truly difficult for UN bodies to provide solutions to the issue as the UN along with many other international organs do not prefer to aid countries that are being ruled by semi or total dictatorial regimes, in which case Venezuela is a prime example. This has also been a problem as the very idea of sending financial aid to the crippled Venezuelan economy to potentially divert their attention from the Guyanese matter through the UN or UN-affiliated organs has gotten historically ruled out due to this.

## VIII. Possible Solutions

When experts are in the process of deriving clauses to promote solutions, they must take into account certain fundamental details. The first of these aspects is how the international oil trade is strongly interactive with the Venezuelan economy. Although most of the sanctions that were imposed in the last decade still exist, they are fundamentally sanctions that have been imposed on individuals who are associated with the Maduro government rather than Venezuela itself. These sanctions have shown the side of the countries who've applied them, however, they have also put a heavy burden on the general public as the sanctions decreased overall trade between Venezuela and its historic trade partners, like the USA or Mexico. This lack of trade and transparency, especially in the oil industry, has proven harmful to the populace and workers in the oil industry, which continues to be one of the largest sectors of economic



activity in Venezuela's oil-dependent economy. Bearing this in mind, experts should try not to limit the existing severed relations to a further extent with their clauses, as such levels of isolation would create hostile relations in the Americas between Venezuela and US-aligned states.

Another method that could prove helpful would be a method of stabilizing the broken relations between Venezuela and countries that have applied sanctions. This is also important as the sanctions have made the Venezuelan government ally more closely with China, creating a sense of disunity amongst neighboring countries similar to the situation during the Cold War. Similarly, another aspect that has to be given attention is how Venezuela's increased advance towards occupying Guyana was most accelerated after the 2015 oil discovery on the shores of Essequibo. As aforementioned, many experts have come to consider this to be a method by Venezuela to increase its control over the oil industries in South America while also trying to improve its economy. Here, Venezuela's control over a region like Essequibo would make the economic severance of trade between Venezuela and the world even more impactful. So, experts should keep in mind how any clause aiming to direct the global oil trade to the increasing Guyanese oil could trigger an ambitious response by Venezuela.

Lastly, experts could also use past solution attempts to produce ideas. For example, experts could reflect on how the Geneva Agreement, an agreement that did not have any binding or "radical" elements, had proven useful. So, an expert deriving their clauses could try to follow a slower pace to first aim at reestablishing peaceful relations between Venezuela and other parties. This could prove helpful considering how the Venezuelan regime would be less inclined to continue its aggressive goals if the "provoking" countries were willing to negotiate diplomatically to solve the issue.

## IX. Useful Links

### - Videos and Documentaries:

- <https://youtu.be/DQ7fTSirNDs?si=O8EdJeCG-P6XJuYV>

This is a rather extensive video that talks about many important details, especially the parties involved and the historical background behind the issue.

- <https://youtu.be/Btqc9Kch980?si=pT8smroePQ32hkg8>

A video by TLDR News goes into detail about the consultative referendum held in 2023 and its background.

- <https://youtu.be/EwsLgpVoUOc?si=8vSQCGYd0W-ThboG>



This video mentions the cooperative aspects of the issue rather well. It also shows the Guyanese perspective on the issue through interviewed persons.

- Websites and Articles on the Issue

- <https://cebri.org/revista/en/artigo/138/notes-on-the-history-of-the-venezuelaguyana-boundary-dispute>
- <https://dppa.un.org/en/mission/border-controversy-between-guyana-and-venezuela>
- <https://news.mongabay.com/2024/04/whats-really-at-stake-in-the-venezuela-guyana-land-dispute-commentary/>
- <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/americas/venezuela-orders-state-companies-to-exploit-oil-and-gas-in-disputed-territory-in-guyana/3074228>
- <https://www.forbes.com/sites/arielcohen/2023/11/16/venezuela-vs-guyana-the-battle-for-el-essequibos-oil/>
- <https://time.com/6343549/guyana-essequibo-region-venezuela-dispute/>
- <https://oilnow.gy/news/chinas-cnooc-makes-it-clear-guyana-assets-not-in-any-disputed-areas/>
- <https://corporate.exxonmobil.com/locations/guyana/guyana-project-overview>
- <https://www.iar-gwu.org/print-archive/yoxfxv494opc0b79rrwbyh69a95bri>
- <https://www.cfr.org/background/venezuela-crisis>
- <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/venezuelas-reach-guyanas-territory>



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