

BACKGROUND GUIDE

UNSC



MUNIMUN

2026



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Letter from the Secretariat

Dear Delegates,

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the 2026 edition of the Masaryk University Model United Nations Conference. As Secretary General, it is an immense privilege to witness the incredible passion and dedication each of you will bring to this conference.

As our motto suggests, our aim for this year is to help delegates lead, think, and be inspired. In accordance with this goal, we have curated a diverse selection of committees and topics that ensure heated debate and the need for compromise. We hope that each delegate can take advantage of the unique space that MUNs bring, one where ideas are tested, diplomacy is practiced, and perspectives are broadened.

On behalf of the entire MUNIMUN team, I wish you the best of luck in your preparations and sincerely hope you have fun at the end of the day.

Do not forget that we are here to help ensure that your experience at MUNIMUN is the best that it can be. Should you have any questions, comments, concerns, or any other statements, please do not hesitate to contact me, your chairs, or the general MUNIMUN email.

I look forward to seeing the energy you bring to this conference and the lasting memories you will create.

Best wishes,

Kerem Efe Özen

Secretary General



Letter from the chair

Dear Delegates,

My name is Hasan Guliyev, and it is my great pleasure to welcome you to the United Nations Security Council at MUNIMUN. I am originally from Azerbaijan and currently pursuing a degree in International Relations and European Politics.

My journey in the MUN movement began in 2022, and since then it has become an essential part of both my academic and personal development. I had the honor of being a member of the national MUN team under the Ministry of Youth and Sports of Azerbaijan, representing my country at numerous international conferences. Beyond traditional MUNs, I have also participated in real diplomatic and policy-oriented conferences, including those organized within the framework of the Non-Aligned Youth Movement, which allowed me to gain hands-on exposure to multilateral diplomacy.

Before moving to the Czech Republic, I studied in Tbilisi as a European Union Eastern Partnership Scholar, where I pursued the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme. Alongside my studies, I was actively involved in civil society as a Local Coordinator for Students For Liberty, working across Azerbaijan and Georgia, and I have since continued my engagement by transferring to the Czech chapter of the organization.

In addition to academic and diplomatic pursuits, I have had the opportunity to work as a volunteer at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan, serving in the Protocol Department, where I assisted in welcoming presidents, prime ministers, and high-level delegations during international events. This experience further strengthened my understanding of formal diplomacy and international protocol.

Outside of academia, my hobbies include mountain biking, swimming, and film photography, which help me maintain balance and creativity. Life in Brno has been incredibly dynamic for me—I truly enjoy the city's mobility, ease of travel, vibrant social environment, and the healthy balance it offers between academic life and personal growth.

I am confident that together with my Co-Chair Elsa, we will provide you with a challenging, engaging, and memorable UNSC experience. I look forward to witnessing your debates, diplomacy, and solutions.

Best regards,

Hasan Guliyev

Main Chair, United Nations Security Council

Committee overview

The United Nations Security Council was created in 1945 by the UN Charter and was then adopted by the UNGA at the San Francisco Conference. The committee was created to prevent future global conflicts like WWII and is responsible for maintaining and protecting international peace and security. It serves as one of the central decision-making organs of the UN and is considered to be the most powerful body within the UN. It has 15 member states, each under the UN Charter obligated to comply with final Council decisions, setting it apart from other UN organs; the UNSC works alongside the UNGA, however, unlike the UNGA, the UNSC's resolutions are legally binding. The Security Council serves as a governing and enforcement body of the UN and exercises authority over peacekeeping missions. The five permanent members exercising veto power include: China, France, Russia, United Kingdom, and United States. Non-permanent members are elected every two years by the UN General Assembly. The presidency is held by each member country and is rotated on a monthly basis. The Security Council meets on an ongoing basis throughout the year with no fixed schedule, often several times a week or daily during crises, and holds its meetings at United Nations Headquarters in New York City.

The United Nations has four main purposes: “to maintain international peace and security; to develop friendly relations among nations; to cooperate in solving international problems and in promoting respect for human rights; and to be a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations”, with the Security Council’s specific mandate to maintain international peace and security. The Council deals with a wide range of issues, including armed conflicts, civil wars, terrorism, nuclear proliferation, humanitarian crises, and violations of international law, ultimately seeking to reduce violence, protect civilians, and support conditions for international political stability. When complaints concerning threats to peace are brought before the Council, the first action of the Council is typically to support the involved parties in resolving the conflict peacefully. If unsuccessful, the Council may implore ceasefire directives or implement peacekeeping missions. In more severe cases, the UNSC can resort to imposing economic sanctions, arms embargoes, severing of diplomatic relations, or even collective military action. Decisions in the United Nations Security Council are typically taken through formal voting, requiring at least 9 affirmative votes and no veto from any of the 5 permanent members.

Key developments of the UN Security Council begin with the Cold War dynamics emerging after the end of WWII and the establishment of the committee. The frequent use of the veto power limited the action of the Council and shaped a cautious and selective approach. In 1965, the membership increased from 11 to 15 states. In the 1990s post-Cold War era, due to increased cooperation of world powers, there was a significant rise in UNSC activity, including an increase in peacekeeping operations and sanctions regimes and a wider interpretation of threats to peace, including civil wars and humanitarian crises. Specifically, in 1991, the UNSC demonstrated its ability to authorize collective military action. After 9/11, the counterterrorism mandate expanded with resolutions addressing terrorism, non-state actors, and global security cooperation. Furthermore, there is continued discussion over Council expansion, veto reform, and representation, reflecting shifts in global power but with no formal structural change.

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TOPIC A:
DE-ESCALATING TENSIONS IN
THE SOUTH CHINA SEA

De-Escalating Tensions in the South China Sea: Ensuring Freedom of Navigation and Regional Security

Background

Timeline - Historical background

1. Pre-1945 – Colonial-era administration of islands
2. 1939–1945 – Japanese occupation during World War II
3. 1947 – Eleven-Dash Line map issued
4. 1949 – People's Republic of China adopts claims
5. 1950s–1960s – Competing claims emerge after decolonization
6. 1974 – Battle of the Paracel Islands
7. 1982 – United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea adopted
8. 1988 – Johnson South Reef naval clash
9. 1994 – UNCLOS enters into force
10. 1995 – Mischief Reef incident
11. 2002 – ASEAN–China Declaration on the Conduct of Parties
12. 2009 – Nine-Dash Line submitted to the United Nations
13. 2012 – Scarborough Shoal standoff
14. 2013 – Philippines files arbitration case
15. 2013–2016 – Large-scale land reclamation and island building
16. 2016 – Permanent Court of Arbitration ruling
17. 2017 – Present – Intensified military patrols and FONOPs
18. 2020s – Repeated maritime confrontations and gray-zone incidents

Defining the issue

The issue of de-escalating tensions in the South China Sea concerns overlapping territorial and maritime claims by China, Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, and Taiwan over strategically important areas such as the Spratly Islands and Paracel Islands. Central to the dispute are key concepts like freedom of navigation — protected under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea — Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs), and China’s “Nine-Dash Line” claim, which was rejected in 2016 by an international arbitration ruling in favor of the Philippines. The issue matters internationally because the South China Sea carries roughly one-third of global maritime trade, contains valuable energy and fishing resources, and has become a focal point of strategic rivalry between China and the United States, meaning that any escalation could disrupt global trade, undermine international law, and threaten regional and global security.

Historical background

The dispute in the South China Sea emerged from overlapping territorial claims that date back to the early 20th century but intensified after World War II, when regional powers began reasserting sovereignty over island groups such as the Spratly Islands and Paracel Islands. During the Cold War, control over these features became strategically important, and tensions escalated notably in 1974 and 1988 through naval clashes involving China and Vietnam. The issue was further transformed by the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which introduced the concept of Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs), intensifying legal disputes over maritime entitlements. In response to rising tensions, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations adopted the 1992 ASEAN Declaration on the South China Sea, calling for peaceful resolution and self-restraint. A decade later, China and ASEAN member states signed the 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties (DOC), which aimed to promote confidence-building measures and prevent further escalation, though it was non-binding. Despite these diplomatic efforts, large-scale land reclamation and militarization in the 2010s, along with the 2016 arbitration ruling in favor of the Philippines rejecting China’s “Nine-Dash Line” claim, significantly reframed the dispute as both a legal and strategic confrontation with global implications.

International framework

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) is one of the foundational international treaties in regard to the happenings on and in the ocean, including the high seas, international waters which no country has claim to. The convention was agreed upon in 1982, entering into force in 1994. UNCLOS created a system of maritime zones including the Territorial Sea (up to 12 miles from a state’s coast), Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs— up to 200 nautical miles), the Continental Shelf, and the High Seas (over 200 nautical miles from shore). It also states that the high seas are for every state and gives the right of innocent passage and freedom of navigation, postulating that states have the responsibility to protect and preserve the shared marine environment. Each coastal state involved in the South China Sea conflict is a party to UNCLOS, even China, with a total of 168 ratifying parties. It’s important to note,

however, that the United States neither signed nor ratified the Convention, considering certain provisions in UNCLOS against its national economic and security interests. The International Maritime Organization (IMO) also plays a key role and presents concern about navigation risks due to militarization. UNCLOS does provide mechanisms for dispute settlement including arbitration and tribunals.

In the Philippines v. China arbitration administered by the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA), a tribunal constituted under Annex VII of UNCLOS ruled in favour of the Philippines, declaring that China's Nine-Dash Line and claims to historic rights have no legal basis under UNCLOS. Following this 2016 ruling, China deemed the outcome null and void, not accepting the results of the tribunal. The PCA has also rejected the 'island' status of Spratlys in the 2016 arbitral ruling, meaning that they are not applicable to the 200 nautical mile rule, directly undermining China's legal basis on its territorial claims.

Current state of the issue

Today, the situation in the South China Sea remains tense but managed, with competing claims and strategic competition continuing to shape regional dynamics. While freedom of navigation — a principle under the United Nations' United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea — has not been legally blocked for merchant shipping, frequent confrontations occur between coast guard and naval forces, especially between China and the Philippines, including recent patrols and accusations of destabilizing behaviour by both sides. Reports indicate that China has increased maritime patrols and accused the Philippines and its allies, particularly the United States and Japan, of "creating chaos," even as those partners conduct joint exercises aimed at defending navigation rights. (Ministry of Defence China) Physical incidents, such as a 2025 collision near Scarborough Shoal and periodic use of water cannons and harassment by the China Coast Guard, underline ongoing risks of escalation.

At the same time, regional states are increasingly responding through both diplomatic and security measures. Countries such as Vietnam, the Philippines, and Malaysia have sought stronger security partnerships and increased maritime patrols, while also raising disputes within the framework of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). ASEAN continues to promote negotiations for a Code of Conduct intended to manage tensions in the disputed waters, although progress has been slow due to differing national interests and disagreements with China over enforcement mechanisms. Meanwhile, external actors such as the United States, Japan, and Australia have increased naval presence and joint exercises in the region to support allies and maintain open sea lanes, which Beijing often views as interference in regional affairs.

These overlapping dynamics make the dispute particularly difficult to resolve. The South China Sea is strategically vital for global trade routes and is believed to contain significant fisheries and potential energy resources, increasing its economic importance. At the same time, sovereignty claims tied to national identity and security concerns limit the willingness of states to compromise. As a result, the region remains characterized by a fragile balance: military posturing and power competition continue alongside diplomatic efforts aimed at preventing incidents from escalating into a broader conflict.

Key points of tension

The major contradictions in this issue stem from China's largely historically based claims over massive swaths of the South China Sea region, encroaching on the territorial claims of other coastal states. The main disputes can be seen between China's claims and the Philippines, as mentioned in the above international framework with the Philippines v. China tribunal.

Claimant states such as Vietnam and the Philippines face a constant trade off between sovereignty and economic stability. These states are seemingly stuck between aggressively facing China's encroaching territorial claims and facing economic punishment or bargaining energy cooperation with China in hopes to have their economic and resource needs met. China itself faces a similar trade-off of its priorities; either it continues to assert its military and territorial actions in the regions, or it risks a diplomatic breakage between itself and ASEAN nations or further involving international actors such as the United States. Furthermore, ASEAN states in general face the power and cooperation struggle when it comes to China, only further exacerbated by this conflict and the innate asymmetrical power imbalance. A structural challenge that also comes into play is China's use of 'gray zone operations' and military 'feigns', essentially keeping their military and other advancements just under the threshold of 'armed', making it difficult for mutual defense treaties to be enacted.

The issue itself is difficult to address right now due to the contested nature of the dispute. China argues against international intervention from the United States, for example, claiming that this only exacerbates tensions. Another marker of the complexity of this conflict is China's continued partyship to UNCLOS even after the blatant ruling against China's 9 dash line policy by ITLOS. Rather than exit from the treaty after disregarding the award favoring the Philippines, China reasserted its adherence and commitment to UNCLOS. When each involved state claims to be following international law and disputes persist, it is clear that the actors are not respecting the same norms and outcomes of international rulings.

Link to the committee

The issue of South China Sea tensions falls under the UNSC mandate due to its role as a major international waterway and geopolitical hotspot, where repeated military escalations and territorial confrontations pose a threat to regional security and peace. The committee is positioned to address military escalation risks and prevent armed conflict through diplomacy as well as support freedom of navigation as a matter of international peace and security. The UNSC can also issue binding resolutions and statements aimed at de-escalation and regional cooperation, supporting conflict resolution through adherence to international law, specifically UNCLOS. The committee routinely reaffirms its position for peaceful settlement of disputes under Article 33 of the UN Charter. The Security Council does not, however, have the authority to resolve territorial sovereignty claim disputes or to settle specific territorial ownership claims between states. Its role in this dispute is relatively tied to the interests of the permanent Council members.

Bloc Analysis

Bloc 1: Claimant States

The central actors in the South China Sea dispute are the states that directly claim islands, reefs, or maritime zones in the region. These include China, Vietnam, Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, and Taiwan. Each of these countries asserts sovereignty over parts of the South China Sea and seeks to protect access to fisheries, potential energy resources, and strategically important maritime routes.

Although these states share overlapping claims, their approaches to the dispute differ. China maintains its **Nine-Dash Line** claim in the South China Sea and has constructed artificial islands while expanding its presence in disputed areas. The Chinese government argues that disagreements should be resolved primarily through bilateral negotiations between the states directly involved, rather than through external intervention or international arbitration. Other claimant states, such as Philippines and Vietnam, have increasingly emphasized international legal frameworks such as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea when asserting their maritime rights.

Despite disagreements, most claimant states seek to avoid open military confrontation. Their policies often combine diplomatic engagement, legal arguments, and maritime patrols in an effort to defend national interests while maintaining regional stability.

Bloc 2: External Powers

A second group of actors consists of states that are not direct claimants but play an important role in shaping the broader strategic environment of the South China Sea. These external powers include the United States, Japan, and Australia, which have expressed interest in maintaining open and secure maritime routes in the region.

These countries often frame their involvement around the protection of freedom of navigation and the preservation of a rules-based international maritime order. The United States regularly conducts Freedom of Navigation Operations to challenge maritime claims it considers inconsistent with international law. Japan and Australia have also increased maritime cooperation and joint exercises with regional partners, including Southeast Asian states, to support maritime security and stability.

At the same time, these activities are sometimes viewed differently by other actors in the region. China has frequently criticized such operations as external interference in regional matters, arguing that the presence of outside military powers can increase tensions rather than reduce them.

Bloc 3: Regional Actors and Mediators

A third group consists of Southeast Asian states that are not directly involved in the territorial disputes but are nevertheless affected by rising tensions in the South China Sea. Countries such as Indonesia, Singapore, and Thailand generally approach the issue through diplomatic engagement and regional cooperation.

Many of these states operate within the framework of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which has sought to promote dialogue and conflict management among the parties involved. ASEAN has supported negotiations toward a Code of Conduct in the South China Sea, intended to establish guidelines for maritime behavior and reduce the risk of escalation. However, progress on these negotiations has been gradual, partly due to differing interests among member states and the broader strategic competition between major powers.

As a result, these regional actors often emphasize diplomacy, dialogue, and multilateral cooperation. Their primary objective is to prevent tensions in the South China Sea from escalating into a broader conflict that could undermine regional stability and economic cooperation.



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TOPIC B:
STATE SOVEREIGNTY VS.
CROSS-BORDER CRIME
ENFORCEMENT: U.S.
LEGITIMACY IN VENEZUELA



State Sovereignty vs. Cross-Border Crime Enforcement: U.S. Legitimacy in Venezuela

Background

Defining the Issue

The debate over state sovereignty versus cross-border crime enforcement in the context of U.S. policy toward Venezuela centers on the tension between respecting national authority and addressing transnational criminal threats. Over the past two decades, U.S. authorities have accused Venezuelan political and military officials of participating in the so-called Cartel of the Suns (*Cartel de los Soles*), a network alleged to be involved in large-scale drug trafficking across Latin America and the Caribbean. These allegations have led to criminal indictments, financial sanctions, and expanded U.S. maritime operations targeting trafficking routes in Venezuelan waters and the wider Caribbean. In 2025, the United States escalated its approach by designating the Cartel of the Suns as a terrorist organization, increasing the visibility and intensity of U.S. law enforcement and security measures in the region. Venezuelan officials reject these claims as politically motivated and argue that unilateral U.S. actions violate the country's sovereignty and impede its domestic security operations.

These developments created a clear sovereignty versus enforcement dilemma. On one hand, the United States argues that its actions are necessary to disrupt criminal networks that operate across borders and threaten regional security. On the other hand, Venezuela emphasizes its right to govern its own territory and prosecute criminal activity without foreign interference. The clash between these positions has generated international debate over how far states can pursue criminal suspects beyond their borders and what mechanisms are legitimate for enforcing law in another country's territory.

State sovereignty refers to a nation's exclusive authority over its territory, population, and legal system. Cross-border crime enforcement involves efforts to investigate, apprehend, or prosecute criminal actors operating in multiple countries, sometimes requiring cooperation with other states or, in controversial cases, unilateral action. Extradition is one formal mechanism for transferring suspects between states for prosecution, but when a state acts unilaterally, it raises questions of legitimacy and security risk.

This issue matters internationally because it directly affects regional security and stability. Transnational criminal networks exploiting Venezuelan territory have contributed to organized crime, corruption, and the expansion of illicit trafficking routes across the Caribbean and Latin America. U.S. enforcement actions, while aimed at countering these networks, also create tensions with Venezuela and neighboring countries, highlighting the challenge of balancing effective cross-border security operations with respect for state sovereignty.

Historical Background

Tensions between the United States and Venezuela over alleged state-linked criminal activity have evolved over more than two decades. During the presidency of Hugo Chávez in the early 2000s, Venezuela's political and economic model diverged sharply from U.S. interests, creating a foundation for ongoing diplomatic friction. Although narcotics trafficking existed in Venezuela like in much of the region, the focus at that time was largely on domestic crime and corruption rather than on direct confrontation with Washington.

By the late 2010s and into the 2020s, U.S. authorities increasingly sought to link specific Venezuelan political and military figures to broader transnational criminal networks. In 2020, the United States Department of Justice unsealed an indictment charging President Nicolás Maduro and fourteen other officials with narco-terrorism, conspiracy to import cocaine into the United States, and related offenses. These charges framed Venezuelan elites as central actors in international drug trafficking, connecting them to networks such as Colombia's Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC), and marked a shift from primarily diplomatic pressure to legal accountability and security measures.

The issue escalated further in 2025 when the U.S. designated the Cartel de los Soles as a foreign terrorist organization. This designation was a major turning point because it reframed what had previously been treated primarily as a narcotics enforcement issue into a national security and counterterrorism matter, allowing the United States to invoke broader legal authorities and impose stricter sanctions. By labeling the cartel as a terrorist entity, U.S. officials could justify not only financial and diplomatic measures but also enhanced law enforcement, intelligence, and military operations. This shift intensified the political stakes and transformed the dispute into a security-driven confrontation, ultimately supporting the expansion of U.S. operations targeting trafficking routes in the Caribbean and Venezuelan waters. For Venezuela, the designation represented a direct challenge to sovereignty and a significant escalation of U.S. involvement, laying the foundation for the heightened tensions that define the current crisis.

Venezuelan authorities have consistently denied these allegations, arguing that the accusations are politically motivated and violate the country's sovereign authority. The complexity of the issue has been compounded by Venezuela's external alliances, particularly with Russia and China, which critics view as part of broader geopolitical rivalries. These relationships have added an international dimension to what might otherwise be seen as a bilateral law enforcement dispute, making the U.S.-Venezuela tensions both a security and a diplomatic challenge.

The result is a complex Historical precedents exist, including the 1989 arrest of Panama's former leader Manuel Noriega trajectory in which long-standing political tensions, allegations of criminality, and evolving U.S. enforcement strategies have converged, producing the current crisis over cross-border security, sovereignty, and the limits of unilateral action.

International framework

The legitimacy of the U.S. actions to capture President Maduro and his wife on January 3rd 2026 remains contested by scholars, politicians, and academics. Specifically, there is debate on whether their capture in Caracas in Operation Absolute Resolve is in accordance with international law. While there is currently no extradition treaty between the U.S. and Venezuela, Washington has offered several overlapping justifications for their actions. One such justification is that Maduro had faced narco-terrorism charges in the United States since 2020, thus allowing the U.S. to frame his capture as a law enforcing action under the pretext of a “counter-narco-terrorism campaign”. Additionally, in November 2025, the Trump Administration designated Nicolás Maduro as the head of a foreign terrorist organization, placing him on the same U.S. State Department list as terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda and the Houthi rebels. This specific designation allowed the U.S. to frame the acts as anti-terrorist and using force in the interest of national security. However, the administration has also contradicted its own claims of law enforcement with notions of regime change as seen in a press conference with Trump saying that the U.S. would ‘run Venezuela’ for an unspecified period of time regarding its management of oil reserves. Critics of U.S. actions argue that Operation Absolute Resolve violates UN Charter Article 2(4), which prohibits the use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, thus infringing on Venezuela’s territorial sovereignty. Furthermore, the actions violated customary head of state immunity and were also exercised without Congressional approval or a clear plan of action.

The primary framework obligating states to cooperate on organized crime is the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime–UNTOC/Palermo Convention (2000). Both the United States and Venezuela are signatories thus showcasing contradiction in that Venezuela is compelled under the law to comply with crime enforcement, all the while accusing the U.S. of violating its sovereignty. Furthermore, the UN Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (1988 Vienna Drug Convention) obligates signatory states to criminalize drug trafficking. Jurisdictional norms include head of state immunity and the *Aut Dedere Aut Judicare* principle, the obligation of states to either extradite or prosecute.

Previous attempts to solve this problem include the Oslo/Barbados Negotiations (2019–2023), Mexico City Talks (2021–2022), OAS Article 20 Invocation (2017), the Lima Group (2017–2023) and recognition of Guaidó, and subsequently the CELAC & ALBA Counterweight which provided Maduro with consistent diplomatic cover in the region. There are also current sanction regimes to take into account, as well as the UNHRC Venezuela Fact-Finding Mission. The UNSC resolutions relevant to this conflict include UNSC Resolution 1373 (2001), UNSC Resolution 2195 (2014), UNSC Resolution 2482 (2019), and the Failed UNSC Resolutions on Venezuela (2019). The Inter-American Democratic Charter (2001) may also be relevant to the issue.

International organizations and bodies involved include UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime), INTERPOL, UNHRC, the Organization of American States (OAS), the ICC, and the World Bank and IMF. Responsibility for the issue is both shared and contested especially with actors such as the United States. The U.S.’s contradictory claims on

legitimacy of Guaidó's presidency and then the later enforcement actions aimed at removing President Maduro. More on this topic is below in the key points of tensions section. As far as the humanitarian crisis is concerned, the U.S. and the EU both place primary causal factors on Venezuelan government corruption, mismanagement, and criminal diversion of state resources. Furthermore, the heavy material burden is felt by the neighboring countries in the region including Colombia, Peru, Ecuador, Chile, and Brazil, hosting over 6 million refugees collectively. On the other hand, the states partially responsible for the political instability (U.S. and Venezuela) bear very little of the humanitarian costs in comparison.

Current state of the issue

As of 2026, the situation remains highly contentious. The United States has escalated military anti-drug operations under Operation Southern Spear – including strikes and naval deployments – and in January 2026 conducted a surprise operation that resulted in the capture and removal of President Nicolás Maduro from Venezuela, provoking international outcry. Many states and international legal experts argue that this action violated the UN Charter and Venezuela's sovereignty because it lacked United Nations Security Council authorisation and did not follow due process under extradition laws. Under international law, the use of force within another state's territory is generally prohibited unless justified by self-defence or approved by the Security Council, making the legality of this operation highly questionable. This blurs the line between legitimate criminal enforcement and unlawful armed intervention, as the use of military force to capture and remove a sitting head of state challenges established legal norms and sets a controversial precedent for future unilateral actions by powerful states.

International reaction has been sharply divided. Within the United Nations Security Council, several states—including Brazil, Mexico, and China—strongly condemned the operation as a violation of sovereignty and an act that risks normalising unilateral uses of force, while others such as Argentina supported it as a necessary step against transnational crime. At the same time, European states and organizations called for restraint, emphasizing that even when addressing criminal networks, actions must remain within the framework of international law. This division highlights a broader geopolitical split between states prioritizing sovereignty and those prioritizing security enforcement.

The crisis has therefore become a serious precedent-setting issue. Many analysts warn that if such unilateral operations become accepted practice, it could undermine the rules-based international order and weaken the authority of the UN system, particularly given the Security Council's inability to respond effectively when a permanent member is involved. Challenges include the deteriorating security and humanitarian situation within Venezuela, high levels of political instability, and broader implications for the legality of unilateral cross-border operations if used by powerful states.

Key points of tension

A major point of tension within the U.S.-Venezuela conflict is the foreign terrorist organization designation of *Cartel de los Soles*. This designation did not explicitly authorize the use of U.S. military for, however, the Trump administration claimed that it expanded their military options.

This domestic contradiction wasn't necessarily resolved before the execution of Operation Southern Spear. Another point of contradiction was that the campaign itself was framed as a counter-narcotics operation, whereas the majority of fentanyl— a synthetic opioid causing substantially more U.S. deaths than trafficked cocaine— entering the United States enters through Mexico rather than Venezuela. Furthermore, there is an evident contradiction with head of state immunity and the authority of a narco-terrorism designation on Maduro. The debate of whether one takes precedence over the other has not been formally arbitrated by an international court. Additionally, the mixed interests of the United States regarding Venezuela's oil reserves blur the lines of U.S. claims of the operation as strictly law enforcing.

A major trade-off that is occurring as a result of this conflict is that between accountability and stability of Venezuela. The capture of Maduro satisfies some law enforcement objectives but also creates an evident power vacuum within the state, further destabilizing the country and , as previously stated, causing additional conflict overflow into neighboring countries. Another compromise to be noted is between the enforcement of counter-narcotics measures and humanitarian protection. The actions of the U.S. in Venezuela have brought questions to the effect that their actions have had on civilians and the migration crisis tied to the instability in the country.

Finally, this issue is quite difficult for the UNSC to address due to the veto power of the permanent Council member states. Russia and China will most likely be against any resolution that validates the U.S.'s actions whereas the U.S. will veto any self-condemning resolutions. Also, the capture of President Maduro has not changed the structure of Venezuela's government system. Any criminal networks present and operating were largely untouched by Maduro's capture while diplomatic and legal complications substantially grew. Finally, there was no clear post-capture plan made evident by the United States. The absence of such a post-operation plan has majorly increased the diplomatic difficulty and abilities of the UNSC to act within this conflict.

Link to the committee

This issue falls under the UNSC's mandate due to its inherent threat against peace and security within the region and internationally. Being as the issue is connected to transnational organized crime, it connects to resolutions 1373 (2001), 2195 (2014), and 2482 (2019), respectively, establishing that transnational crime networks financing terrorism constitute threats to international peace, obligating all states to cooperate on enforcement, explicitly linking transnational organized crime to international security threats, and directly addressing the link between organized crime and armed conflict. Furthermore, the UNSC has jurisdiction when a humanitarian crisis incites cross-border instability. 7.9 million Venezuelans have fled the country since 2014, with refugee flows straining surrounding states such as Colombia, Peru, Ecuador, and Brazil, generating domestic political crises in those states as well. These migration pathways have further aided the growth of human trafficking and the expansion of organized crime networks (notably Venezuela's *Tren de Aragua's* expansion into Chile, Colombia, Peru, and the U.S.).

The issue of the U.S. cross-border enforcement itself is under the UNSC mandate, as unilateral extraterritorial enforcement without multilateral sanction sets precedents that destabilize the international legal order. If this becomes the precedent, other powerful states may adopt similar tactics and use the U.S. example as a legitimizing factor for their indiscretions against less powerful adversary states. Not only does the UNSC have mandate over the conflict, but also over this case of international norm erosion when it constitutes a threat to peace. Continually, P5 direct involvement of the U.S., China, and Russia designates the UNSC as the primary forum for these actors to communicate through, given the absence of a different regional or supranational body that could leverage or arbitrate this dispute.

The UNSC can potentially produce declaratory or non-binding frameworks that formulate a normative achievement for the involved states. Furthermore, cross-border immigration flows and humanitarian spillover can be addressed as a security threat and produce actionable outcomes for involved states. Finally, the UNSC can take some actions in regard to organized crime networks. The committee can not, however, force Venezuelan compliance or redefine sovereignty norms

Bloc Analysis

Bloc 1: Cross-Border Enforcement Approach

One group of states supports a stronger emphasis on cross-border law enforcement in response to transnational criminal networks operating from within Venezuela. This position is most clearly represented by the United States and is often supported by regional partners such as Colombia and Ecuador, which face direct security challenges linked to drug trafficking routes and organized crime. Governments in this group argue that narcotics trafficking and related criminal networks pose serious national security threats that cannot be addressed solely through traditional diplomatic cooperation.

From this perspective, when state officials are allegedly involved in criminal activity, conventional mechanisms such as bilateral policing or extradition may become ineffective. As a result, these states support measures including criminal indictments, sanctions, asset freezes, and other forms of extraterritorial law enforcement aimed at disrupting criminal networks. Washington has framed such actions as part of a broader campaign to combat narcotics trafficking and organized crime in the Western Hemisphere. The designation of the *Cartel de los Soles* as a terrorist organization by the United States in 2025 further reinforced this approach, expanding the legal tools available to target networks believed to facilitate drug trafficking into North America and Europe.

Supporters of this position often emphasize the significant domestic impact of drug trafficking and organized crime. Countries along major trafficking routes face rising levels of violence, corruption, and criminal infiltration of state institutions, which encourages stronger regional cooperation with U.S. counter-narcotics and security initiatives.

Bloc 2: Sovereignty and Non-Intervention Approach

A second group of states emphasizes the protection of state sovereignty and the principle of non-interference in domestic affairs. This position is represented most prominently by Venezuela and is supported by governments such as Cuba, Nicaragua, Bolivia, as well as external partners including Russia and Iran. These states argue that unilateral enforcement actions taken by foreign governments risk undermining national sovereignty and may be used as tools of political pressure.

Governments in this group generally reject allegations that Venezuelan authorities are directing organized criminal networks and instead frame the accusations as politically motivated. From their perspective, sanctions, indictments, and military deployments linked to counter-narcotics operations represent attempts to exert geopolitical influence or promote regime change. As a result, they advocate resolving disputes through diplomatic dialogue, multilateral institutions, and respect for the sovereign authority of states over their own territory.

Underlying this position are broader concerns about precedent. Many of these countries have historically experienced sanctions, political pressure, or external intervention, and therefore emphasize the importance of strict adherence to sovereignty and non-interference. They argue that legitimizing unilateral cross-border enforcement actions could create a precedent that might later be used against other states facing internal security challenges.

Bloc 3: Multilateral and Legalist Approach

A third group of states emphasizes a multilateral and rules-based approach to addressing transnational crime while maintaining respect for state sovereignty. Countries such as Brazil and Mexico generally support stronger international cooperation to combat organized crime but remain cautious about unilateral enforcement actions conducted by foreign governments within another state's jurisdiction. These governments tend to favor solutions based on diplomacy, international legal frameworks, and coordinated regional security mechanisms.

European actors, particularly Denmark and other members of the European Union, often adopt a similar position. While the European Union itself may not act as a voting delegation in many UN committees, its member states frequently align around common foreign policy principles that emphasize international law, due process, and multilateral problem-solving. From this perspective, combating transnational crime requires cooperation through institutions such as the United Nations and regional security frameworks rather than unilateral enforcement measures.

States in this group therefore attempt to balance two priorities. On one hand, they recognize that transnational criminal networks represent a serious security challenge that requires international cooperation. On the other hand, they express concern that unilateral enforcement actions could set precedents that undermine sovereignty norms or escalate regional tensions. As a result, these actors often advocate diplomatic dialogue, coordinated law enforcement efforts, and regional cooperation mechanisms as a pragmatic path between strict non-intervention and aggressive cross-border enforcement.

Research and Preparation questions

Topic A: Tensions in the South China Sea

1. What concrete material stakes does your country have in the South China Sea?
2. What is your country's legal position on UNCLOS and the 2016 Arbitral Tribunal ruling, and how consistently has it applied that position?
3. How do economic ties with involved states affect your country's position on the conflict?
4. What domestic laws, military capabilities, and institutional frameworks does your country have to either contribute to or resist enforcement of maritime security norms in the South China Sea?
5. Does China's self-image of a law-abiding state create opportunities for amicable and equitable settlement of its disputes with neighboring coastal states in the South China Sea?
6. What forms might a dispute settlement process take?

Topic B: State Sovereignty vs. Cross-Border Crime Enforcement

1. Can international law develop a legitimate, rule-based framework for cross-border enforcement against state-sponsored crime?
 - a. Or, does every attempt to do so simply institutionalize the power of stronger states to act against weaker ones?
2. What multilateral mechanisms should govern cross-border enforcement against state-sponsored crime generally?
3. To what extent should states be permitted to pursue criminal investigations and enforcement actions beyond their borders when the accused actors are linked to foreign governments?
4. How can the international community balance the need to combat transnational criminal networks with the protection of state sovereignty and non-interference in domestic affairs?
5. What role should multilateral institutions and regional cooperation mechanisms play in regulating cross-border crime enforcement and preventing unilateral escalation between states?

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