

Security Council Committee

Research Reports



Human Rights Committee Research Reports

Forum: Human Resources Committee

Issue: Preventing Armed Conflict in the Essequibo Region of Guyana

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Introduction

The territory of Essequibo occupies about 160,000 square kilometers and is the area in western Guyana that both – Guyana and Venezuela – consider as part of their territory. This is an old colonial heritage which at one time or the other approaches the arena of war, thus posing serious security challenges to the whole of the region and its people. To avoid a situation where this occurs, one has to engage in diplomatic work, follow the law governing international relations and be proactive in dealing with all the causes. Consequently, the objectives of this report are to give a detailed presentation on the state of affairs and give practical recommendations for sustainable peace.

Definition of Key Terms

Essequibo Region

An area in the country of Guyana that is endowed with resources and located at the eastern side of the Essequibo River. It consists of woodland tropical, savanna, and the large resources of mineral deposits.

Territorial Dispute

This can be defined as a dispute or a conflict of two or more sovereign states, especially regarding the ownership or use of the territory. These conflicts might stem from the historical issues, the interests in natural resources or the cultural and ethnic issues.

Armed Conflict

A clash that is characterized by the actual use of arms or the credible threat to use arms by states or any other non-state entities. Wars may be categorized as general involving large nations to minor outbreaks of hostilities between nations or groups.

Mediation

A method in which a third person helps the conflicting parties in the act to reach a consensus and come up with a decision that is preferred by all parties in the conflict.

Diplomatic Relations

Refer to the diplomatic affairs and dealings between sovereign states, this is by way of ambassadors, treaties and international organizations.

It indicates the major countries and organizations that are involved in a given product.

Guyana

A small South American nation, explained that it focused on the Essequibo territory as their sovereign territory according to the 1899 arbitral award. Guyana has tried to use legal and diplomatic measures to solve the conflict and has insisted on compliance with international legal norms.

Venezuela

Venezuela occupies the Essequibo territory while they claim that the 1899 arbitration award was unfair to them. This would explain why Venezuela has sought influence in the region due to its resource endowment especially in oil and minerals.

United Nations (UN)

The UN still has an important function of initiating the negotiations and supplying the means for the peaceful settlement. The Secretary-General has from time to time participated in the so-called “Good Offices” where he acts as a go-between in the conflict.

Organization of American States (OAS)

The OAS seeks the preservation of peace and security in the region, helping its member states, including Guyana and Venezuela, through diplomacy and providing conflict-solving resources.

Commonwealth of Nations

Guyana, which is a member of the commonwealth, receives diplomatic and legal assistance from this international organization that supports the use of diplomacy to solve conflicts.

Timeline of Events

1899: An arbitration court deciding under the Treaty of Washington gave more territory of the Essequibo River to British Guiana now known as Guyana.

1962: Venezuela denounced the 1899 arbitral judgment and resumed the demand on the Essequibo area.

1966: The Geneva Agreement is signed that creates certain provisions of handling the problem through negotiation with the help of the bilateral treaties and the help of third countries.

1982: The cooperative of Guyana gets independence; it attains the geographic state territory based on the arbitral award map of 1899.

2015: Large oil reserves are found in offshore Essequibo which raises the level of tensions, Venezuela adopts a maritime claim.

2018: In the case of border controversy with Venezuela, Guyana decides to take the matter to the ICJ for a final legal decision.

2020: The ICJ finds it has a proper jurisdiction to afford the claims with the trial progressing.

GNSS and the United Nations Convention on Countries Associated

Geneva Agreement (1966): An Arbitration between the Republic of Venezuela and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland acting on behalf of the colony of British Guiana to refer the Dispute to the ICJ for a peaceful settlement. Much of the role of the UN Secretary-General is featured in the agreement as the central person responsible for the management of the conflict.

United Nations Charter (1945): Sets out the norms of non-use of force and non-threat of force, as well as sovereignty and inviolability of the territory.

International Court of Justice (ICJ) Proceedings: The referring of the territorial controversy to the ICJ demonstrates Guyana's desire for a legal solution that has reference to the ICJ delivering a binding decision on the matter.

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

Arbitration Award of 1899: British Guiana got awarded the Essequibo region by way of an international arbitration tribunal. While both disputing parties agreed to this tribunal, eventually, Venezuela denied the received award, stating it was unfair.

Geneva Agreement (1966): This agreement aimed at finding a diplomatic solution regarding the controversy within the framework of bilateral negotiation with the support of the "Good Offices"

of the UN Secretary-General. This process was to look for a compromise and resolution that is acceptable by both parties; however, it has been marred with some difficulties because of distrust and different self-interests.

Possible Solutions

ICJ Referral (2018): This action has brought Guyana closer to a definable end and will help in finding a legal solution from the ICJ. This gives a pointer to the role played by international law especially the ICJ in the settlement of territorial disputes. Possible Solutions Strengthening Diplomatic Channels: The first one is the creation of permanent and orderly talks between Guyana and Venezuela with the assistance of third parties in order to address short-term issues and develop mutual confidence in the long-term perspective. International Mediation: Working with skilled third parties, who can be ex-diplomats or citizens of the countries that have no conflict of interest in this conflict.

Legal Resolution: Assisting the court in its hearings and making sure that the two parties concerned honor and obey the decisions made by the ICJ. This approach in the situation reaffirms the rule of law and ensures that there is a clear way through which the issue can be solved.

Economic Cooperation: To achieve economic cooperation, the parties need to engage in joint business initiatives for the development of the disputed area, for example, the construction of pipelines and other necessary facilities, as well as other forms of mutually beneficial cooperation connected with the extraction of resources.

Confidence-Building Measures: Measures to avoid conflict: for instance, the withdrawal of forces and hardware from the border zones, joint border security, and cultural interchanges.

Regional Security Mechanisms: Enhancing the regional organizations like OAS and CARICOM in order to establish means for communication, preventing and solving the conflicts.

Humanitarian Assistance and Development: Offering international, and foreign assistance aimed at the enhancement of the welfare of inhabitants, infrastructural development, and provision of services to the region of the Essequibo.

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