

Security and Peace in an Uncertain World

Case Study I: The territorial disputes of Central and South America's countries in the 21st century

The Method and the Platform

The course employs a mixed learning approach, with online preparation (colored items) and offline classroom seminar (grey item) utilizing digital solutions, employing the flipped classroom concept. The online solutions are hosted on the Moodle LMS supplied by the University.



Introduction

In Latin America, presently there is a growing trend towards land and maritime border disputes, which risks disrupting peace and undermining stability in the region.

However, tensions arising from territorial disputes have been present since the independence of Latin American states, and in some cases led to wars in the 19th and 20th centuries, but mostly only to the point of sabre-rattling and mobilisation of forces, without any real military action. The few conflicts that did culminate in localised aggression did not, with one or two exceptions, escalate into a real war.

However, increasingly frequent and often hostile statements by the leaders and political elites of certain states can be heard, accusing others, blaming other states for their perceived or real grievances, their possible landlocked status or the resulting economic and other disadvantages, and often highlighting the use of force as a possible means of resolving disputes between states, even in official communications.

This is a worrying trend in a region where wars have been fought for such reasons in the past.

Overall, while tensions are rising in Latin America relevant to disagreements over disputed borders and territories, the international treaties and existing peace agreements, as well as mutual respect for international law and diplomacy, have meant that the countries concerned have not automatically resorted to the use of force and war to resolve their disputes in recent decades.

Territorial Disputes



Abstract

Latin America's countries were avoided by greater wars after their often bloody liberation from the colonial system. At the same time, smaller, local wars and territorial conflicts affected some countries, and often created tense interstate atmosphere and the delineated areas of the geographically disputed affiliation. Hence, in the 21st century, the above mentioned controversial territorial debates of the 19th and 20th centuries continue to determine modern claims of interstate relations. Together they form the problematic legacy of the 21st century.

There are several land disputes in Latin America: Chile and Bolivia (Atacama, Antofagasta), Argentina and the UK (Las Malvinas or Falkland Islands), Brazil and Uruguay (El Rincón de Artigas, Ilha Brasileira, Masoller), Costa Rica and Nicaragua (Isla Calero), Guayana and Venezuela (Essequibo), Guatemala and Belize (Cayo, Belize, Stann Creek and the Toledo Territories). It is also the part of the study to show that the already existing problems with their colonial roots are expanded by the race for the resources and the global markets. Resolution of the above-mentioned disputes is unlikely to take place in the near future, despite the measures and efforts already taken.

Analysis Framework

| Assessment | Claimer country | Targeted country | Claimed/disputed territory | Reasons of the claim |
|------------|-----------------|------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|
| Dispute 1 | | | | |
| Dispute 2 | | | | |
| Dispute 3 | | | | |
| Dispute 4 | | | | |
| Dispute 5 | | | | |
| Dispute 6 | | | | |
| Dispute 7 | | | | |

The ICJ and the UN

In the cases examined, the results show that Latin American states in the 21st century are much more inclined to favour peaceful settlement proposals over the warlike conflict resolution practices of two centuries ago. Even within the options offered by peaceful solutions, the involvement of internationally recognised organisations and arbitration boards is essentially the most popular way of dispute resolution.

There are basically two reasons for this.

- Firstly, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) now offers a real alternative to war being the sole solution, and international organisations such as the United Nations (UN) and its conflict management activities are now recognised worldwide as impartial and legitimate arbitrators and peace-builders (Kacziba, 2017).
- The other reason is that the use of war as a means among Latin American nations is considered stigmatizing, degrading, and therefore to be avoided. In addition to this, many international treaties explicitly prohibit the use of military force, and countries that have accepted this as a binding criterion for themselves may face serious international sanctions if this is breached (Paterson-Flynn, 2013: 1).

Recent History

In the second half of the 20th century, Central and South America became a side theatre in the Cold War that divided the world into two, and the underlying problems, in terms of territorial claims, did not really change or get resolved during this period. Relations between Chile and Bolivia are particularly bad, the border between Belize and Guatemala is disputed. Argentina and Chile are in dispute over the sovereignty of the Beagle Channel, Venezuela claims significant territories in Guyana, and Ecuador has territorial claims against Peru (Marshall, 2018: 278). Presently, the territorial disputes that still exist have either been suspended or are being resolved through diplomacy and international law, but with few real and tangible results.

Class Discussion Topics and Tasks

Fill out the analysis framework!

Why were the Latin American countries avoided by greater wars after their often bloody liberation from the colonial system?

What other factors can be mentioned which may have contributed to South America's backwardness to avoid major conflicts?

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