



BACKGROUND GUIDE

WAMUNC XXIV

Organization of American States

COMMITTEE OVERVIEW

The Organization of American States was founded on April 30th, 1948. While its original purpose was to promote various forms of cooperation between member states, this goal has since morphed into hope for promoting peace in the region, both through diplomacy and potential military action. Historically, the OAS has played a large role in major events throughout Latin America. Most notably, the organization played a major role during the Cuban Missile Crisis, working to cut diplomatic ties and institute sanctions against Cuba, while also acting in conjunction with then-President Kennedy militarily. In recent years, the OAS has played a pivotal role in combating major South American crises: the OAS has also played a major role in the 2019 Bolivian Elections, the Crisis in Venezuela, and the 2010 Haitian elections. In each of these instances, the OAS has received both praise and criticism. Its role in exposing human rights violations, and the promotion of democratic ideals in developing nations, have received praise by the international community; however, its institutional shortcomings, like a lack of staff and funding, have led to criticism levied towards its ability to successfully carry out its mission and related projects, like election monitoring. For example, during the 2019 Bolivian Elections, several researchers commented on a lack of statistical evidence to support the organization's claims of election interference, likely caused by a lack of election observers in the region.

The committee will run with standard GA-style Parliamentary Procedure. For speaking, the majority of the committee will be driven by moderated caucuses, with a recommended time limit of 15 minutes, and typical speaking times being 30 or 45 seconds. Expect to present Working Papers by the 2nd session on Saturday, and Resolutions during the 2nd session on Sunday.

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Salutations delegates,

My name is Parth Badhwar, and I am honored to be chairing the Organization of American States here at WAMUNC XXIV! I'm currently a first-year here at THE George Washington University, studying Political Science with a few possible minors. I originally come from Manhattan Beach, California, which has much worse weather compared to DC, in my opinion. In terms of MUN, I have been Model UNing since my freshman year of high school, and I've been able to travel from coast to coast debating against some fascinating folks. I tend to prefer GA/Regional Body committees over Crisis, so I am very excited to be chairing OAS!

Outside of Model UN, I'm also on GW's Undergraduate Moot Court Team, and I'm active in the Pre-Law Student Association. Some of my hobbies include LARPing, soap carving, and Didgeridoo playing. I'm also a huge fan of Avatar (the one with the blue people), and I have attended many Avatar conventions, both as a LARPer and academic. Overall, I am incredibly excited to see y'all at WAMUNC this year. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, feel free to email me at bparth@gwu.edu. Bring your best!

Cheers,

Parth Badhwar

BACKGROUND GUIDE

Topic A: The Argentine Great Depression

Historical Context

Five years prior to the start of its Great Depression, Argentina was hailed as a potential economic superpower, particularly after a tumultuous decade in the 1980s. Output and export levels increased exponentially, annual inflation was in the low single digits (a particularly impressive achievement, considering the hyperinflation crisis in the 1980s), and the government was able to prevent financial catastrophe during/after the Tequila Crisis in 1995, which reduced annual GDP growth by nearly 8 percent that year. Many of these successes were supported by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) which implemented a series of successful economic recovery programs in Argentina during the 1980s and early 1990s. Many of these reforms coalesced into Argentina's 1991 Convertability Plan, which put an emphasis on an export-driven economy. However, the success of this plan, such as the achievement of an average of 5-percent yearly GDP growth, led to a show of overconfidence in the government by IMF officials, setting the stage for the Depression.

While economists are still debating the root causes of the depression, a combination of factors likely resulted in the emergence of the Argentine Great Depression. The first, and arguably simplest, was the amount of deficit spending by the government. Argentina's public debt increased by ten percent between 1992 and 1998. 9% of this was driven solely by government spending- like the reformation of social security, compensation payments, and other public works projects. While some economists and scholars argue that spending was not the sole reason for the crisis, nearly all scholars agree that a more conservative fiscal approach during the period would have greatly reduced Argentina's borrowing needs in the late 1990s and early 2000s, reducing the impacts or probability of a debt crisis.

A variety of other factors contributed to the debt crisis: the transition of Argentina's currency, from Austral to Peso, and its low fixed level of Arg\$3.90 per US dollar has become a serious cause of concern, both within Argentina and throughout the overall Latin American economy. Additionally, financial uncertainty around the world helped contribute to Argentina's downturn. Specifically, the Russian Crisis helped contribute to the rise of prime lending rates, the rise of real interest rates by over 5 percentage points, and the negative downturn of private debt-creating capital inflows. Finally, the instability of Argentina's overall governmental institutions, both financial and political, has greatly contributed to the depression. Argentinian officials have been regularly criticized for corrupt business dealings, resulting in a lack of trust in the government by the Argentine people. When it comes to institutions, Argentina's reliance on its Convertibility Plan and the Peso also resulted in the creation of a delicate financial empire: with the entirety of Argentina's economy, including its ability to keep inflation in check, tied to the Peso, maintaining the currency was essential. However, as we saw, it eventually collapses, causing the Argentine Great Depression.

Committee Topics

The committee's primary goal is to help Argentina, but many international topics tie into this goal. First, in terms of strictly Argentina-based issues, stabilizing the economy through aiding the government in managing all sectors of the economy, stabilizing the currency, and promoting international growth will be essential. Additionally, Argentina experienced mass riots and civil unrest during the depression, so finding solutions to stop these riots and creating more trust among the community is essential. Finally, the depression exposed systemic government corruption in Argentina, so using the OAS to combat that will be important. All of these solutions must be implemented through a lens of protecting Argentina's national sovereignty; while the nation has depended on the aid of other nations and international organizations in the past, self-determination is still a fundamental right that must be respected by the OAS.

In terms of international solutions, as previously mentioned, less pressing financial issues in Latin America, and around the world, have contributed to the crisis in Argentina. Researching and fixing the problems attributed to those is another topic of interest, though not the main focus of the committee. Finally, the issue of tying currencies to the US dollar and the effects both domestically and internationally will be essential to discuss for all delegates.

Possible Solutions

In terms of the economic situation, it is expected that most solutions will come through the International Monetary Fund and inter-state collaboration. In reality, the IMF has been criticized for its role during the Argentine Great Depression, so delegates should look at areas where they failed (lack of leniency/discounts for debt payments, over-liberalization of Argentina's economy). Delegates should also look at previously successful methods of stabilizing Argentina's currency (like returning to the stabilized Austral currency, rather than the Peso). Finally, delegates should look at ways to stabilize the economies of neighboring nations in Latin America, which could be accomplished by promoting economic stimulus and incentives through the IMF/World Bank to promote development and stability. As mentioned in Committee Topics, all solutions should be within the purview of the Organization of American States, and something that can be feasibly implemented while respecting the national sovereignty of Argentina.

Bloc Positions

To arrive at an explicit bloc position, delegates should look towards their nation's diplomatic relations with the governments in question, alongside their previous interactions with international bodies. Considering the OAS is a bloc in itself, delegates will need to conduct extensive research on their nation's relationship with individual member states, and the overall bloc, to develop a comprehensive country policy for the committee.

Questions to Consider

1. How can the OAS stabilize Argentina's currency while also respecting its sovereignty as a nation?
2. What effective methods exist to decrease political tensions/riots, and how can they be implemented in Argentina while still respecting their national sovereignty?
3. What can the international community do to strengthen the overall Latin American economy?
4. How can the OAS and International Monetary Fund work together in order to strengthen Argentina's economic institutions?
5. Considering the ripple effects of other nations' financial troubles affecting Argentina, what can the OAS do to reduce and/or avoid this in the future?

Topic B: The Colombian Drug Trade

Historical Context

In the 1970s, Colombia's role as the world's drug supplier began not with cocaine, but with marijuana. A group of farmers in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta region of the country, who previously grew common crops like bananas and coffee, shifted to marijuana production. According to economic scholars, this shift was caused by increased economic globalization: after a series of major trade deals between the Colombian government and large economic superpowers, like the United States, Colombian industry expanded but left farmers in more rural regions poorer than before. Increased poverty also resulted in an opening for drug traffickers and cartel groups to encourage the production of more dangerous substances, like cocaine, which led to increased farming of the coca leaf, and the beginning of the modern drug trade in Colombia.

With the boom of cocaine production, cartels and other criminal organizations began to emerge in the region. The most well-known was the Medellin Cartel, which was run by notorious trafficker Pablo Escobar. This group was not only notorious for its sheer control over the international drug trade, but for its violent crime: the cartel regularly murdered adversaries, participated in human trafficking, and kidnapped opponents.

They also wielded large amounts of political influence in Colombia, both due to corruption and fear of violent retribution for the opposition. Other notable cartels have since risen and fallen in Colombia, like the Cali Cartel and North Coast Cartel, but cartels are still a major part of the drug trade.

Today, the drug trade is perpetuated through a combination of cartels, paramilitary groups that are more aligned with right-wing ideologies, and guerilla movements that are aligned with left-wing ideologies. These groups have wreaked havoc on Colombian society- murdering politicians, committing various human rights atrocities, and also participating in the trade itself.

Committee Topics

A big focus of the committee should be on combating the influence of cartels in Colombia. On top of facilitating the production and distribution of drugs, cartels also wield large amounts of political power due to their ability to induce violence and connections to government officials. This influence is present in Colombia and throughout Latin America, which allows cartels to traffic these dangerous substances throughout the Americas with relative ease.

Additionally, many smaller paramilitary groups have appeared in Colombia to combat leftist political ideologies in Colombia while also battling for control of the drug trade. While these groups have less of an international presence, they still present a real danger in Colombia, as they have committed numerous human rights violations and frequently murder political adversaries.

As a result of drug trafficking, Colombia has also faced a wave of social concerns, which contribute to this cycle of trafficking. Farmers of coca suffer from inhumane living conditions and often see large amounts of disease within their living quarters. Additionally, cartels regularly participate in human trafficking, mainly for financial gain and to promote loyalty among their workers. Coca production also contributes heavily to the destruction of natural habitats, as the production of cocaine can result in chemical pollution to neighboring areas.

Finally, the ongoing violence between varying groups in Colombia has disrupted the lives of ordinary citizens, making it harder for children to go to school safely and harder for families to live everyday lives. All of these are topics that delegates should consider in the committee.

The overall international drug trade has proven to be a notable area of concern. While Colombia supplies much of these drugs, the failure of governments to prevent their smuggling and distribution within their own borders is another reason for the continued demand for these products. Additionally, nations have invested large amounts of time, money, and military force into combatting the drug trade; an example being the United States. The USA, which is the largest buyer of Colombian drugs, purchasing over \$60 billion worth of drugs every year, has also combat cartels in Colombia itself. The USA has designated multiple cartels are terrorist groups and has used its intelligence and military capabilities to stop these cartels. Their efforts, so far, have been unsuccessful, but the United States continued to make these investments. Other nations in the UN have their own drug-prevention policies, so it will be important for delegates in this committee to research their country policy closely, to see how your nation related to the overall international drug trade.

Possible Solutions

Committee solutions should have three main areas of focus: stopping the Colombian cartels, aiding Colombia's crumbling humanitarian crisis, and combatting the international drug trade. In terms of combatting cartels, delegates should look at previous methods used to combat their influence, whether it's military intervention, economic sanctions, or increased policing. When crafting solutions, it is important to keep in mind Colombia's sovereignty as a nation, ensuring that any military intervention is conducted with the full consent and cooperation of the Colombian government.

Colombia is also facing a humanitarian crisis; while much of it is fueled by the cartels and the drug trade, the international community does have the ability to intervene. Colombia has faced a growing human trafficking problem, with cartels facilitating it, resulting in Colombian families being stripped of their members. Additionally, farmers and workers in Colombia, particularly those who assist with the production of drugs, face inhumane living conditions, low pay, and the constant threat of violence by cartel members. The international community can certainly aid with these issues: whether it be working with local NGOs to help workers transition away from drug production, to funding new policing and anti-human trafficking forces, the humanitarian crisis in Colombia is chock-full of both issues and potential solutions.

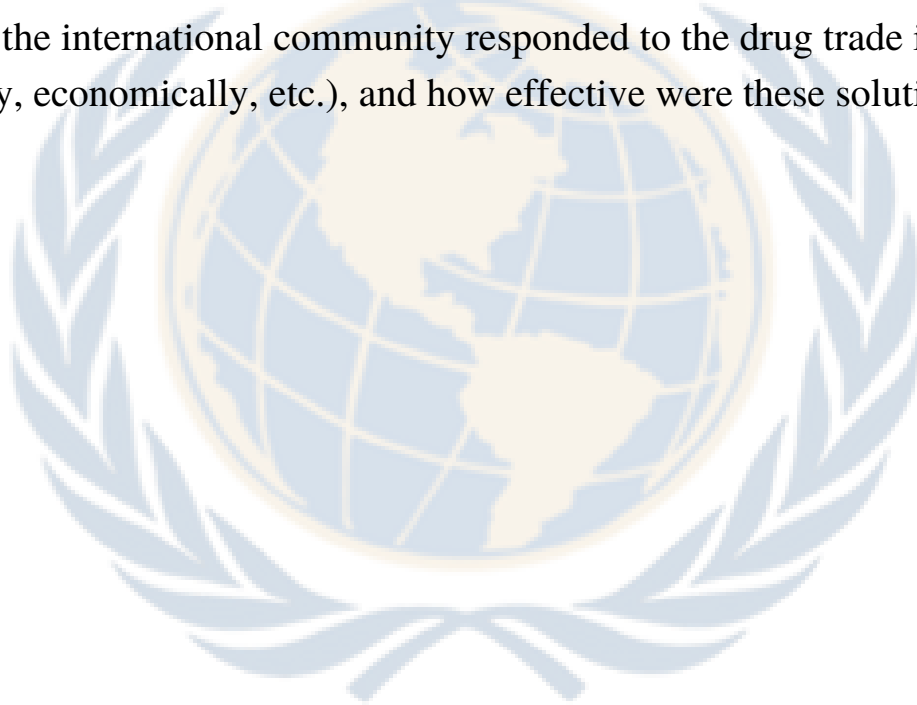
Finally, the international community certainly has a large role in elongating the drug trade. Cocaine produced in Colombia has risen by over 100,000 hectares since 2013 in the last few years, and nations have largely failed at stopping these drugs from reaching their citizens. Many nations have also used their own resources to attempt to deal with the influence of cartels by themselves, largely to no effect. In terms of finding solutions, the international community must do three things: first, understand why drug demand is so high in their own nations, whether it's because of a lack of education, enforcement, or mental health support. Second, nations should analyze their own measures to combat the trafficking of drugs, like border security or policing, and determine their effectiveness. Last, nations should look at their involvement with Colombia's domestic affairs, in hopes of solving the issues that plague Colombia directly, like cartels and humanitarian concerns. This involvement includes their role in providing foreign aid, trade deals, and overall diplomatic relations.

Bloc Positions

To arrive at an explicit bloc position, delegates should look towards their nation's diplomatic relations with the governments in question, alongside their previous interactions with international bodies. Considering the OAS is a bloc in itself, delegates will need to conduct extensive research on their nation's relationship with individual member states, and the overall bloc, to develop a comprehensive country policy for the committee.

Questions to Consider

1. How can the international community work together to combat the influence of cartels, both in Colombia and across the Americas?
2. What can the OAS do to provide relief to the people of Colombia, who are suffering from human rights abuses and flagging living conditions?
3. Considering the political influence that cartels have in Colombia, and the widespread government corruption currently present, what can the OAS do to strengthen Colombia's government as a whole?
4. What concrete methods exist to lower the demand for drugs around the world, and to prevent the continuation of this crisis?
5. How has the international community responded to the drug trade in the past (militarily, economically, etc.), and how effective were these solutions?



References

Buscaglia, Marcos A. 2004. The political economy of Argentina's debacle. *Journal of Policy Reform* 7 (March): 43–65.

“The Business - Colombian Traffickers | Drug Wars | Frontline.” PBS, Public Broadcasting Service,
<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/drugs/business/inside/colombian.html>.

Calvo, Guillermo A.; Alejandro Izquierdo; and Ernesto Talvi. 2003. Sudden stops, the real exchange rate, and fiscal sustainability: Argentina's lessons. Working Paper 9828. National Bureau of Economic Research.

“Colombia.” United Nations : Office on Drugs and Crime,
<https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/alternative-development/colombia.html>.

Comisi&Ioacute;N Ecumenica De Derechos Humanos- Plan Colombia,
<http://www.derechos.net/cedhu/plancolombia/consecuenciasEcuador.html>.

Dirección Nacional de Coordinación de Políticas Macroeconómicas. 2002. La actividad económica y el empleo después de la depreciación real del peso. Dirección Nacional de Coordinación de Políticas Macroeconómicas, Secretaría de Política Económica, Argentina.
http://www.mecon.gov.ar/peconomica/docs/informe_coyuntura1.pdf.

History.com Editors. “History of Drug Trafficking.” History.com, A&E Television Networks, 31 May 2017, <https://www.history.com/topics/crime/history-of-drug-trafficking>.

References

Krueger, Anne O. 2002. Crisis prevention and resolution: Lessons from Argentina. International Monetary

Lee, Brianna, and Danielle Renwick. "The Organization of American States." Council on Foreign Relations, Council on Foreign Relations, <https://www.cfr.org/background/organization-american-states>.

Oas. "Organization of American States: Democracy for Peace, Security, and Development." OAS, 1 Aug. 2009, <https://www.oas.org/en/>.

"The International Drug War." Drug Policy Alliance, <https://drugpolicy.org/issues/international-drug-war>.

Sala, Mar Romero. "Drug Trafficking and Colombian 'Peace'." Global Americans, 8 May 2019, <https://theglobalamericans.org/2019/05/drug-trafficking-and-colombian-peace/>.

Sanchez-Garzoli, Gimena. "Protests and Human Rights Violations in Colombia: Second Alert." WOLA, 6 July 2021, <https://www.wola.org/2021/07/protests-and-human-rights-violations-in-colombia-second-alert/>.

Stone, Hannah, et al. Colombia Elites and Organized Crime Final - Justice. <https://www.justice.gov/eoir/file/886131/download>.

"World Report 2021: Rights Trends in Colombia." Human Rights Watch, 13 Jan. 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/colombia>.