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**SPECPOL**

Special Political and Decolonization

Freya Gordon

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**Briefing paper**

**Committee: Special Political and Decolonization Committee (SPECPOL) Topic: The Question of the Essequibo Territorial Dispute**

**Background:**

The Essequibo region is located in South America and has been subject to a territorial dispute between Venezuela and Guyana for over a century. The origins of this dispute date back to the 19th century when Venezuela claimed the territory based on historical arguments.

In 1899, an arbitration tribunal awarded the disputed territory to British Guiana (now Guyana), a decision Venezuela did not fully accept. Despite numerous attempts at negotiations and mediation, the issue remains unresolved to this day.

# Current Situation:

Tensions over the Essequibo territorial dispute have resurfaced in recent years, with both Venezuela and Guyana asserting sovereignty over the region. Venezuela has claimed that the 1899 arbitral award was invalid and has reiterated its claim to the territory. This has led to diplomatic friction between the two countries, as well as concerns about potential impacts on regional stability.

The discovery of oil reserves off the coast of Essequibo has further intensified the dispute, as both Venezuela and Guyana seek to exploit these resources for economic gain. The involvement of international oil companies in exploration activities has added complexity to the situation.

# Key Countries and Perspectives:

* Venezuela: Venezuela maintains the argument that the 1899 arbitral award was unjust and that the Essequibo region rightfully belongs to Venezuela. The Venezuelan government has taken various diplomatic and legal measures to assert its claim to the territory.
* Guyana: Guyana insists that the 1899 arbitration settled the dispute conclusively, and the Essequibo region belongs to Guyana. The Guyanese government has sought international support for its position and has emphasized the need for a peaceful resolution to the dispute.
* International Community: The international community, including regional organizations such as the Organization of American States (OAS) and the United Nations, has expressed concern over the Essequibo territorial dispute. Many countries have called for dialogue and peaceful negotiation to resolve the issue and have urged both Venezuela and Guyana to refrain from actions that could escalate tensions.

# Possible Solutions:

* Diplomatic Negotiation: Encourage Venezuela and Guyana to engage in direct diplomatic negotiations to find a mutually acceptable solution to the dispute. International mediation efforts could facilitate these negotiations.
* Legal Resolution: Consider options for resolving the dispute through international legal mechanisms, such as referring the matter to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) for adjudication. Both Venezuela and Guyana would need to agree to submit to the jurisdiction of the ICJ.
* Resource Sharing: Explore the possibility of joint development or resource-sharing agreements for the exploitation of oil reserves in the disputed area. This could provide an economic incentive for both countries to work together towards a peaceful resolution.

# Conclusion:

The Essequibo territorial dispute remains a complex and longstanding issue that poses challenges to regional stability and economic development. Venezuela and Guyana need to engage in constructive dialogue and seek peaceful avenues for resolving the dispute. The international community can play a supportive role by encouraging negotiation, promoting dialogue, and offering assistance in finding a mutually acceptable solution.

# Useful websites:

[https://www.cfr.org/podcasts/guyana-venezuela-border-dispute-missile-defense-base-polan](https://www.cfr.org/podcasts/guyana-venezuela-border-dispute-missile-defense-base-poland-drc-elections-and-more) [d-drc-elections-and-more](https://www.cfr.org/podcasts/guyana-venezuela-border-dispute-missile-defense-base-poland-drc-elections-and-more)

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-67723936>