



STUDY GUIDE

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Chairperson's Address

Introduction

The **Organization of American States** is an inter-continental organization founded on 30 April 1948, for the purposes of regional solidarity and cooperation among its member states. Headquartered in **Washington D.C., United States**, it is the world's oldest regional organization, dating back to the First International Conference of American States, held in Washington, D.C., from October 1889 to April 1890. That meeting approved the establishment of the International Union of American Republics, setting the stage for the weaving of a web of provisions and institutions that came to be known as the inter-American system, the oldest international institutional system.

After it came into being in 1948 with the signing in Bogotá, Colombia, of the Charter of the OAS, which entered into force in December 1951, it was subsequently amended by the Protocol of Buenos Aires, signed in 1967, which entered into force in February 1970; by the Protocol of Cartagena de Indias, signed in 1985, which entered into force in November 1988; by the Protocol of Managua, signed in 1993, which entered into force in January 1996; and by the Protocol of Washington, signed in 1992, which entered into force in September 1997. The General Assembly is the supreme organ of the OAS and comprises the delegations of all the member states, with each having the right to one vote.

The Permanent Council attends to the matters entrusted to it by the General Assembly or the Meeting of Consultation of Ministers of Foreign Affairs; monitors the maintenance of friendly relations among the member states and the observance of the standards governing General Secretariat operations; and acts provisionally as Organ of Consultation.

Today the OAS brings together all 35 independent states of the Americas and constitutes the main political, juridical, and social governmental forum in the Hemisphere. In addition, it has granted permanent observer status to 69 states, as well as to the European Union (EU). The Organization uses a four-pronged approach and is based on its main pillars: democracy, human rights, security, and development.

History

The notion of an international union in the New World was first put forward by Simón Bolívar who, at the 1826 Congress of Panama (still being part of Colombia), proposed creating a league of American republics, with a common military, a mutual defense pact, and a supranational parliamentary assembly. This meeting was attended by representatives of Gran Colombia (comprising the modern-day nations of Colombia, Ecuador, Panama, Venezuela, Peru, and Bolivia), The United Provinces of Central America, and Mexico but the grandly titled “Treaty of Union, League, and Perpetual Confederation” was ultimately ratified only by Gran Colombia. Bolívar’s dream soon floundered with civil war in Gran Colombia, the disintegration of Central America, and the emergence of national rather than New World outlooks in the newly independent American republics. Bolívar’s dream of American unity was meant to unify Latin American nations against imperial domination by external power.

The pursuit of regional solidarity and cooperation again came to the forefront in 1889–1890, at the First International Conference of American States. Gathered together in Washington, D.C., 18 nations resolved to found the International Union of American Republics, served by a permanent secretariat called the Commercial Bureau of the American Republics (renamed the “International Commercial Bureau” at the Second International Conference in 1901–1902). These two bodies, in existence as of 14 April 1890, represent the point of inception to which today’s OAS and its General Secretariat trace their origins. At the Fourth International Conference of American States (Buenos Aires, 1910), the name of the organization was changed to the “Union of American Republics” and the Bureau became the “Pan American Union.” The Pan American Union Building was constructed in 1910, on Constitution Avenue, Northwest, Washington, D.C.



The Pan American Union shortly after its construction in 1910

In the mid-1930s, U.S. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt organized an inter-American conference in Buenos Aires. One of the items at the conference was a "League of Nations of the Americas", an idea proposed by Colombia, Guatemala, and the Dominican Republic. At the subsequent Inter-American Conference for the Maintenance of Peace, 21 nations pledged to remain neutral in the event of a conflict between any two members. The experience of World War II convinced hemispheric governments that unilateral action could not ensure the territorial integrity of the American nations in the event of external aggression. To meet the challenges of global conflict in the postwar world and to contain conflicts within the hemisphere, they adopted a system of collective security, the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (Rio Treaty) signed in 1947 in Rio de Janeiro.

The Ninth International Conference of American States was held in Bogotá between March and May 1948 and led by United States Secretary of State George Marshall, a meeting which led to a pledge by members to fight communism in the western hemisphere. This was the event that saw the birth of the OAS as it stands today, with the signature by 21 American countries of the Charter of the Organization of American States on 30 April 1948 (in effect since December 1951). The meeting also adopted the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man, the world's first general human rights instrument, Bogotá considered the first defensive state in the event of war, of the Organization of American States.

The transition from the Pan American Union to OAS would have been smooth if it had not been for the assassination of Colombian leader Jorge Eliécer Gaitán and all the commotion that follows. The Director General of the former, Alberto Lleras Camargo, became the Organization's first Secretary General.

Significant milestones in the history of the OAS since the signing of the Charter have included the following:

- 1959: Inter-American Commission on Human Rights created.
- 1959: Inter-American Development Bank created.
- 1961: Charter of Punta del Este signed, launching the Alliance for Progress.
- 1962: OAS suspends Cuba.
- 1969: American Convention on Human Rights signed (in force since 1978).
- 1970: OAS General Assembly established as the Organization's supreme decision-making body.
- 1979: Inter-American Court of Human Rights created.
- 1991: Adoption of Resolution 1080, which requires the Secretary General to convene the Permanent Council within ten days of a coup d'état in any member country.
- 1994: First Summit of the Americas (Miami), which resolved to establish a Free Trade Area of the Americas by 2005.
- 2001: Inter-American Democratic Charter adopted.
- 2009: OAS revokes 1962 suspension of Cuba.
- 2009: OAS suspends Honduras due to the coup which ousted President Manuel

Zelaya.

- 2011: OAS lifts the suspension of Honduras with the return of Manuel Zelaya from exile.

Functioning

Goals and Purpose:

In the words of Article 1 of the Charter, the goal of the member nations in creating the OAS was “to achieve an order of peace and justice, to promote their solidarity, to strengthen their collaboration, and to defend their sovereignty, their territorial integrity, and their independence.”

Article 2 then defines eight essential purposes:

- To strengthen the peace and security of the continent.
- To promote and consolidate representative democracy, with due respect for the principle of nonintervention.
- To prevent possible causes of difficulties and to ensure the pacific settlement of disputes that may arise among the member states.
- To provide for common action on the part of those states in the event of aggression.
- To seek the solution of political, judicial, and economic problems that may arise among them.
- To promote, by cooperative action, their economic, social, and cultural development.
- To eradicate extreme poverty, as this constitutes an obstacle to the full democratic development of the people of the hemisphere.
- To achieve an effective limitation of conventional weapons that will make it possible to devote the largest amount of resources to the economic and social development of the member states.

Over the course of the 1990s, with the end of the **Cold War**, the return to democracy in **Latin America**, and the thrust toward **globalization**, the OAS made major efforts to reinvent itself to fit the new context. Its stated priorities now include the following:

- Strengthening democracy: Between 1962 and 2002, the Organization sent multinational observation missions to oversee free and fair elections in the member states on more than 100 occasions. The OAS also works to strengthen national and local government and electoral agencies, to promote democratic practices and values, and to help countries detect and defuse official corruption.
- Working for peace: Special OAS missions have supported peace processes in **Nicaragua, Suriname, Haiti, and Guatemala**. The Organization has played a leading part in the removal of landmines deployed in member states and it has led negotiations to resolve the continents' remaining border disputes (**Guatemala/Belize; Peru/Ecuador**). Work is also underway on the construction of a common inter-American counter-terrorism front.
- Defending human rights: The agencies of the inter-American human rights system provide a venue for the denunciation and resolution of human rights violations in individual cases. They also monitor and report on the general human rights situation in the member states.
- Fostering free trade: The OAS is one of the three agencies currently engaged in drafting a treaty aiming to establish an inter-continental free trade area from **Alaska to Tierra del Fuego**.
- Fighting the drugs trade: The **Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission** was established in 1986 to coordinate efforts and cross-border cooperation in this area.
- Promoting sustainable development: The goal of the OAS's **Inter-American Council for Integral Development** is to promote economic development and combating poverty. OAS technical cooperation programs address such areas as river basin management, the conservation of biodiversity, preservation of cultural diversity, planning for global climate change, **sustainable tourism**, and natural disaster mitigation.

Organizational Structure

The Organization of American States is composed of an **Organization of American States General Secretariat**, the Permanent Council, the Inter-American Council for Integral Development, and a number of committees.

The General Secretariat of the Organization of American States consists of six secretariats.

- Secretariat for Political Affairs
- Executive Secretariat for Integral Development
- Secretariat for Multidimensional Security
- Secretariat for Administration and Finance
- Secretariat for Legal Affairs
- Secretariat for External Relations

The various committees of the Organization of American States include:

- The Committee on Juridical and Political Affairs
- The Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Affairs
- The Committee on Hemispheric Security
- The Committee on Inter-American Summits Management and Civil Society
- Participation in OAS Activities.

General Assembly :

The **General Assembly** is the supreme decision-making body of OAS. It convenes once every year in a regular session. In special circumstances, and with the approval of two-thirds of the member states, the **Permanent Council** can convene special sessions. The Organization's member states take turns hosting the General Assembly on a rotating basis. The states are represented at its sessions by their chosen delegates: generally, their ministers of foreign affairs, or their appointed deputies. Each state has one vote, and most matters—except for those for which the Charter or the General Assembly's own rules of procedure specifically require a two-thirds majority—are settled by a simple majority vote.

The General Assembly's powers include setting the OAS's general course and policies by means of resolutions and declarations; approving its budget and determining the contributions payable by the member states; approving the reports and previous year's actions of the OAS's specialized agencies; and electing members to serve on those agencies.

Drug Trafficking

The trafficking of illicit drugs is a signature Latin American contribution to our globalized world, and today Colombia and Mexico play the paramount roles in terms of production and distribution. The Organization of American States has realized the following points:

- Drug violence is one of the greatest challenges facing the Americas,
- The current approach is a failure and it isn't working,
- New policy alternatives need to be discussed and implemented,
- Drug use will remain significant by 2025.

Mexico has seen “the mutual fostering of security, protection and prosperity” even though there have been 60,000 people killed in drug violence in six years in Mexico. Given its geographic location, Mexico has long been used as a staging and transshipment point for narcotics and contraband between Latin America and U.S. markets. Mexican bootleggers supplied alcohol to the United States gangsters throughout the duration of the Prohibition in the United States and the onset of illegal drug trade with the U.S. began when the prohibition came to an end in 1933. Towards the end of the 1960s, Mexican narcotic smugglers started to smuggle drugs on a large scale. During the 1980s and early 1990s, Colombia's Pablo Escobar was the main exporter of cocaine and dealt with organized criminal networks all over the

world. When enforcement efforts intensified in South Florida and the Caribbean, the Colombian organizations formed partnerships with the Mexico-based traffickers to transport cocaine through Mexico into the United States. By the mid-1980s, the organizations from Mexico were well-established and reliable transporters of Colombian cocaine. The fighting between rival drug cartels began in earnest after the 1989 arrest of ex-policeman Miguel Ángel Félix Gallardo, who ran the cocaine business in Mexico. There was a lull in the fighting during the late 1990s but the violence has steadily worsened since 2000. Challenges faced by OAS concerning Drug Trafficking are as follows:

- **Unity:** Under this scenario, the problem is not drug laws but weak institutions. It foresees greater security and intelligence cooperation among nations, more expenditure in the security and judiciary apparatuses and tougher laws dealing with corruption, gun trafficking and money laundering.

Latin American countries indeed suffer from weak institutions. In 2010 all seven Central American countries combined spent nearly \$4 billion in their security and judiciary apparatuses (a 60 percent increase in five years), yet that fell terribly short of the estimated revenues of the Mexican and Colombian cartels which, according to a report from the Justice Department, could reach up to \$39 billion a year. A disparity among countries in their institution-building efforts is the main feature of drug business in the Americas. For example, in the early 1990s, as pressure grew on coca growers in Peru, they moved to Colombia. Now, after a decade of eradication programs in that nation, they are moving back to Peru. Overall the Andean region continues to produce the same amount of cocaine as it did 20 years ago. Over the years the common denominator of the war on drugs in Latin America has been the attempt to export the problem to your neighbor.

- **Pathways:** Under this scenario, the problem isn't drugs but drug prohibition. It portends a growing number of Presidents in the region calling for the adoption of a legal market for certain drugs, starting with cannabis.

Guatemala's president, Otto Pérez Molina, has already called for the legalization of drugs. Uruguay is considering a bill that would legalize marijuana. And

even in the United States, Colorado and Washington have legalized the recreational use of cannabis. Two challenges come to mind under this scenario. First, the discussion on legalization (or regulation), has focused almost exclusively on marijuana. Indeed, the momentum towards a legal market of cannabis seems unstoppable: [a recent poll showed that 52 percent of Americans favor legalizing the drug](#). The drug warriors in the Obama administration might have decided that the Battle of Cannabis is lost, and are attempting to fall back to a more defensible position. However, the problem in the Andean region, Central America, and largely Mexico, isn't marijuana but cocaine prohibition. In most countries, tough public resistance is prevalent towards a legalized market for cocaine.

This leads us to the second challenge: some countries will be more enthusiastic in adopting legal frameworks for certain drugs while others will stick to prohibition. Given that narco-trafficking is a transnational problem, this would create problems and tensions between governments.

It's not a secret that the pathway toward legalization will prove a difficult one, especially because of the resistance it faces from public opinion in many Latin American countries. However, only legalization deals with the root of the problem: the black market of drugs that creates enormous profit opportunities for organized crime.

- **Resilience:** At the current juncture, the drug problem is a consequence of a larger social problem related to poor socio-economic conditions at the local level and the lack of jobs and opportunities, especially for the youth. It also focuses on addiction as a health problem and not a criminal one.

The scenario portends countries investing in communities, establishing clinics to treat drug addicts, building sport facilities to dissuade youngsters from joining gangs and implementing "harm reduction" policies. This is the most unrealistic scenario. The drug problem in most of Latin America is not abuse but trafficking. Building libraries or basketball courts in poor areas won't stop youths from joining gangs and engaging in drug running when the incomes they derive from it far exceed those they

can earn from legal activities. Moreover good legal jobs are rarely created in areas suffering from violent crime. It's a vicious circle that is difficult to overcome short of legalization. This scenario tackles drug abuse from a health perspective, which is positive. Yet this can also be the case under the legalization scenario.

- **Disruption:** This is perhaps the most politically realistic scenario for the moment. Fed up by the constant failure of prohibition and the little advances in implementing alternatives to the war on drugs, one or a group of countries abandon the fight against international drug trafficking. They adopt a non-interventionist approach to drug smuggling, while focusing their police resources on violent crimes.

Many people speculated that this could be the case of Mexico under its new President Enrique Peña Nieto, although there is little evidence so far that his government is trying to reach accommodation with the cartels. Back in the 1970s and 80s the PRI governments—to which Peña Nieto belongs—adopted a complicit approach to drug trafficking, basically having the federal government look the other way while drugs were shipped to the North. However, back then drug trafficking was basically a family business conducted by an ex-policeman, Miguel Ángel Félix Gallardo, who was later arrested in 1989. Today Mexico has up to seven powerful and violent cartels that fight against each other for control of trafficking routes. Even if the Mexican government were to adopt a non-interventionist approach to drug smuggling, that wouldn't prevent the cartels from engaging in bloody turf wars. Drug violence might decline, since government intervention added volatility to a changing cartel landscape, but it is likely that Mexico would remain a violent country.

Moreover, the report rightly points out that, if a country decides to abandon the fight against drug trafficking, it could become a safe haven for kingpins. Drug money would be likely to flow into that country's economy, potentially corrupting institutions and even civil society.

It is now up to this Committee to decide as to how the Drug Trafficking problem can be solved and it shall go on to discuss which of these scenarios serve their countries better.

Political Instability

The political situation in Latin America is very volatile. Though it gets unnoticed majority of the times, yet the current situation demands attention. There have been attempts made to hamper the growth of democracy in the Latin American states. From outside it seems to be a peaceful continent; however it is a completely different picture once the outer cover is removed and the skeletons are revealed. There are a host of nations where the people are unhappy with their corrupt Government. The leaders of many nations believe in displaying a facade to prove that everything is calm within their nation.

Over the last few years, Brazilian, Chilean and Costa Rican government officers witnessed hundreds of thousands of citizens protesting issues such as crime, corruption, and the lack of low-cost quality public services. Although there are many differences among the movements, the similarities are striking. First, protesters target problems that have significant impact in their lives: education, transportation and political inefficiency. Second and counter-intuitively, those countries have all enjoyed economic booms recently. Finally, all three countries face important elections in the near-term future. The political future of Latin America seems ambiguous as there have been spats between Ecuador and Colombia, rumblings in Venezuela amidst other tensions in the region.

Deeper issues that sustained the protests are lack of trust in government institutions, high levels of corruption, low quality of state-provided services, high living & transportation costs, increase of inflation, runaway costs of 2014 World Cup. Deep discontent over increase of inequality, elimination of benefits for public workers, annulment of public concession law and other domestic issues also sustained the protests. In Brazil, the quality of public services is painfully low, while federal government has been unable to support economic growth. Brazil transfers more than one third of national wealth to the three levels of government while the Brazilian population does not receive the equivalent in services provided by the

government. In Chile, the population is distressed by increasing economic inequality. New fiscal discipline, in the form of benefits elimination for public workers, fuels protests in Costa Rica. Argentineans and Venezuelans face high inflation and generally dislike their public institutions, but they do not have significant volumes of protest activity.

Just before the 2014 FIFA World Cup, clashes took place in the Brazilian capital, Brasília, where 15,000 protesters from the Landless Workers Movement marched from the Mané Garrincha football stadium to the Palácio do Planalto state office of the President, [Dilma Rousseff](#). Riot police using batons and teargas had fought off several attempts to invade the building. The demonstrators had thrown stones and tore down railings which they used as weapons. In the fierce fighting, 12 protesters and 30 police officers had been injured. Rousseff was not in her office at the time, but this latest explosion of unrest is yet another headache for the President in what is supposed to be one of the most triumphant, feel-good years in the nation's history. Hosting the World Cup was intended to show that Brazil - the land long condemned as the "country of the future – and always will be" – had finally arrived. However it transpired into something totally different. The biggest street protest in a generation, took place during the Confederations Cup and rising in violent, nerve-jangling intensity to the point where – just four months from kick-off, people were still being killed in protests, workers were dying in the rush to complete unfinished stadiums and the mood of the nation was far closer to unease than Alegría – joy.

The countdown is on until the 2016 Olympics and Rio de Janeiro is preparing to welcome millions of people from around the world. But in order to succeed as hosts, the Brazilian city, which won the bid to host the Summer Games back in 2009, must address the social tensions, environmental problems and water crises that threaten to mar the biggest sporting event in the world. Here are four of the main challenges Rio must tackle before the Opening Ceremony:

- Pollution in Rio's Guanabara Bay: Guanabara Bay borders Rio de Janeiro's east side and is the host site for the Olympics' sailing and windsurfing events. It's also made

international headlines due to its polluted waters, filled with raw sewage and massive amounts of garbage. While part of Rio's Olympic bid included a promise to clean up the bay by 80 percent, they're currently at 49% of their clean up goal.

- The water and energy crisis: Brazil is suffering from the worst drought in 40 years. The south-eastern city of São Paulo has started rationing water and Rio could be next. Making matters worse, Brazil gets about 70 percent of its energy from hydropower. In Brazil, water crisis equals an energy crisis. It has been observed that the turbines on Brazil's principal hydroelectric plants will stop running if water levels dip below 10% capacity. They're currently at 17%.
- Olympic development is raising social tension: About 8,000 families have been, or are at risk of, removal from their homes for construction linked to the Olympics and the World Cup. While the government has been praised for promising market-rate compensation for those evicted, in practice it seems there is no standard price per square foot. The "Olympic Legacy" in Rio has been criticized for serving mostly the interests of the private sector and the wealthy.
- Street crime and public security: While street crime has generally fallen over the last 30 years, Rio has seen a spike in street robberies in recent months, reaching levels not seen since 1991. In March alone there were seven mass robberies, known as arrastões, in public spaces. Armed robbers assaulted commuters twice in the metro and another group of armed criminals closed off a major tunnel and robbed the stopped cars.

Hence the actual picture suggests that Brazil is not yet completely prepared to host the Olympics next year. It may have adverse effects on the World Community as a whole. There are many issues which need to be fixed in order to ensure that the Rio Olympics is carried out smoothly without any major flaws. Therefore, this Committee needs to come together as a whole to decide the course or direction in which the OAS is going to proceed to allow proper functioning in matters related to the Olympics and also to tackle such political and social tensions in Latin America so as to ensure that the development in these countries is not affected. Undoubtedly this is a serious challenge that the Organization of American States faces at the moment.