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UNIDAD DE ANÁLISIS POLÍTICO Y SEGURIDAD CORPORATIVA

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The United Nations Facing a Crisis of Confidence: Can It Continue to Manage Global Conflicts?

In recent years, the United Nations (UN) has faced a growing crisis of confidence among various countries regarding its ability to fulfill its core purposes: maintaining international peace and security, contributing to conflict management, and protecting human rights. This crisis has intensified since 2014, following Russia's annexation of Crimea, and deepened in 2022 with Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, triggering a war that continues to pit the two countries against each other.

Similarly, the organization has faced criticism over the limitations of its response to human rights violations in the Israel-Palestine conflict, in which civilians, including children and women, have lost their lives as a result of actions by the opposing parties. These situations are compounded by other conflicts in Africa and the Middle East, including those in Sudan, Ethiopia, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as

well as the war in Yemen and the crisis in Myanmar. Together, these conflicts have highlighted the difficulties faced by this international organization in preventing the escalation of violence, protecting civilians, and achieving lasting political solutions.

These international security management challenges fall directly within the responsibilities of the United Nations Security Council. It is precisely within this body that some of the main obstacles to adopting concrete measures to de-escalate conflicts and maintain international peace and security arise. This is partly because, since its establishment, the Security Council has retained a power structure reflecting hegemonic and colonial dynamics, in which five major powers: the United States, Russia, China, France, and the United Kingdom hold a privileged position relative to the other Member States.



In particular, these five countries possess veto power, through which a negative vote by any one of them can prevent the adoption of a substantive draft resolution, even when it has the support of the majority of the Council's other members. In this regard, the veto has become an instrument of political power that allows permanent members to protect their strategic interests and constrain the organization's ability to respond to certain international crises (Akram, 2024).

Regarding one of the international community's most consequential conflicts, the Israel-Palestine conflict, several draft resolutions have been vetoed by the Security Council. These proposals sought to establish humanitarian pauses or a ceasefire in Gaza and promote a political solution based on the coexistence of two states, Israel and Palestine. In this context, the United States has been one of the main actors blocking such initiatives through the exercise of its veto power, in line with its political positions and strategic alliances with Israel. This has hindered the adoption of certain measures intended to halt hostilities and limited the Security Council's ability to respond to the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, as well as efforts to advance toward a lasting political solution to the conflict.

Examples of this situation can be found in several Security Council votes. On October 18, 2023, the United States vetoed a draft resolution seeking to establish humanitarian pauses in the conflict, despite receiving the support of 12 of the Council's 15 members (United Nations, 2023a). Likewise, on October 27 of that year, 120 of the 193 Member States of the General Assembly voted in favor of a resolution calling for an immediate, durable, and sustained humanitarian truce in Gaza.

Subsequently, given the severity of the situation, the United Nations Secretary-General invoked Article 99 of the UN Charter to draw the Security Council's attention to the threat the conflict posed to international peace and security and to encourage the adoption of urgent measures. However, on December 8, 2023, the United States again exercised its veto to block a draft resolution demanding an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza, despite receiving the support of 13 of the Council's 15 members (United Nations, 2023b). These events illustrate how the political positions and strategic alliances of permanent members, particularly those of the United States regarding Israel, can limit the Security Council's ability to respond to international conflicts.

Another decisive factor in assessing the functionality of the United Nations is its ability to maintain its institutional structure and secure funding. In this area, the United States once again occupies a central position, as it has historically been one of the organization's main financial contributors and a strategic actor in its operations. However, relations between the two parties have deteriorated during Donald Trump's administrations, particularly because of his government's decisions to reduce or suspend financial contributions and withdraw support from various bodies within the United Nations system. These measures became evident during his first term, from 2017 to 2021, and intensified following his return to the presidency in 2025. This situation has exacerbated the organization's financial difficulties and highlighted its dependence on contributions from the United States and other Member States (Smith Serrano, 2025).

More specifically, the largest reductions in US funding for the United Nations occurred during Donald Trump's second presidential

term. According to Smith Serrano (2025), the United States reduced its contribution to the UN by 22%, while funding for peacekeeping missions fell by 67%. Meanwhile, funding for United Nations agencies, programs, and funds declined by 34%, and resources allocated to development decreased by 43%. These cuts demonstrate the extent of the decline in US financial support and help illustrate the potential consequences for the organization's ability to maintain its operations and fulfill its primary objectives

Furthermore, it is important to highlight that, since 2021, when civilian, diplomatic, and political personnel, both Afghan and international, were evacuated from Afghanistan, the UN has made no significant progress in several conflicts that had been considered priorities since then, including those in Sudan, Ethiopia, Myanmar, and Yemen, among others.





This situation highlights the limitations of the organization's conflict management capabilities and its ability to achieve its objectives, as well as the potential effects of US funding cuts and suspensions during Donald Trump's two presidential terms and the organization's internal difficulties in meeting its goals (Smith Serrano, 2025).

The case of Afghanistan also demonstrates the importance of US capabilities in conducting certain international operations. During the August 2021 evacuation, US military forces played a decisive role in an operation that enabled more than 123,000 people to be evacuated, including foreign nationals and Afghans from different sectors of society. The operation depended on US logistical and military capabilities, as well as diplomatic cooperation with other countries, including the establishment of transit routes and reception locations for evacuees (U.S. Department of State, 2021). Nevertheless, it is important to distinguish this military operation from the UN's humanitarian and diplomatic activities, as the organization did not lead the evacuation.

Taken together, these cases illustrate how the organization's operational capacity and the implementation of its decisions can be constrained by resource availability and support from major powers, particularly the United States. Thus, at the operational, political, and financial levels, the UN's ability to act faces limitations when it lacks Washington's support. This may deepen the crisis of confidence affecting the organization and undermine Member States' perceptions of its effectiveness in fulfilling its core objectives: maintaining international peace and security, contributing to conflict management, and protecting human rights. This situation reflects a structural contradiction within the multilateral system: the organization must respond to global challenges, yet its ability to do so remains conditioned by the political interests and resource commitments of its Member States.

Venezuela and the United States: From Confrontation to a New Strategic Relationship?

Relations between the United States and Venezuela deteriorated progressively during the administrations of Hugo Chávez and Nicolás Maduro amid growing political tensions and concerns about the democratic situation in the South American country. Although Chávez came to power through elections and implemented social programs that helped improve certain welfare indicators, his administration was also characterized by a concentration of power in the executive branch and concerns regarding human rights protection.

Following Chávez's death in 2013, Maduro assumed the presidency amid political polarization and questions about electoral transparency. During his administration, tensions deepened because of the repression of demonstrations, restrictions on the opposition, and conflicts between the executive branch and legislative institutions. These developments contributed to Venezuela's institutional deterioration and widened political differences with Washington (Congressional Research Service, 2024).

Furthermore, allegations of human rights violations and restrictions on political freedoms in Venezuela became more prominent under Maduro, generating growing concern and disapproval among various states and international organizations, including the United Nations and the United States. Bilateral relations also deteriorated in the economic and energy sectors. In August 2017, during Donald Trump's first administration, the United States imposed financial restrictions related to Venezuela's oil sector. Subsequently, in January 2019, it expanded sanctions by adding Petr6leos de Venezuela S. A. (PDVSA) to its list of sanctioned entities. Following a 90-day transition period, US refineries stopped importing Venezuelan crude oil, complicating the country's oil exports and deepening economic tensions between the two governments (Congressional Research Service, 2024).

Consequently, relations between the two countries were also marked by media confrontations and hostile statements by their respective leaders, who accused each other of promoting criminal activities. These tensions emerged under both Hugo Ch6vez and Nicol6s Maduro. An emblematic example was Ch6vez's speech before the United Nations General Assembly on September 20, 2006, in which he disparagingly referred to then-US President George W. Bush, describing him as an imperialist and accusing

him of promoting policies of global domination, even comparing him to the devil and evil itself (CNN, 2013). Years later, Maduro accused President Donald Trump of financing a fascist conspiracy against Venezuela (EFE, 2026). Trump, in turn, publicly described Maduro as a criminal and linked him to drug trafficking, accusing him of leading an organization engaged in such activities while in power (Cuentas Claras Digital ORG, 2025).

Nevertheless, relations between Washington and Caracas experienced a limited rapprochement during Joe Biden's administration, from 2021 to 2025, which sought to combine economic pressure with diplomatic negotiations. This shift became evident in 2022, when the United States authorized Chevron to resume certain oil operations in Venezuela. It deepened in 2023 with the temporary easing of sanctions following the signing of the Barbados Agreement between Nicol6s Maduro's government and the opposition. That same year, the two countries also reached an agreement to exchange detainees. However, this rapprochement was conditional on compliance with political and electoral commitments, and Washington subsequently adopted a tougher stance in response to what the US government described as failures to meet those commitments (Congressional Research Service, 2024).



The turning point came in January 2026, when, one year into his nonconsecutive second presidential term, Donald Trump ordered a military operation in Venezuela. After repeatedly warning that Nicolás Maduro was an international criminal, the US president announced his capture on January 3, 2026. During the operation, known as “Absolute Resolve,” US troops entered Venezuelan territory and captured both Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores, before transferring them to New York, specifically to the Metropolitan Detention

Center in Brooklyn. Both were scheduled to appear before a federal court in Manhattan to face charges related to conspiracy to import cocaine, narco-terrorism, possession of machine guns and destructive devices, and conspiracy to possess such weapons (Caracol Radio, 2026).

Following Nicolás Maduro’s capture and his appearance before a federal court in Manhattan, Venezuela came to be governed on an interim basis by Delcy Rodríguez, who had previously served as the country’s vice president. On January 5, 2026, in Maduro’s absence, Venezuela’s Supreme Tribunal of Justice ordered Rodríguez to assume the interim presidency. She has held that position since then and is expected to remain in office until a new institutional arrangement is determined through elections (BBC, 2026).

This event, together with the US military operation known as “Absolute Resolve,” marked a turning point in relations between Washington and Caracas, as well as in Venezuela’s engagement with international organizations such as the United Nations. One of the main stages of this reconfiguration occurred between August and September 2026, when several multilateral events and bilateral meetings with the United States took place, alongside agreements between the Venezuelan government and other actors.

In August, an oil agreement between the Venezuelan and US governments was announced, through which Washington secured majority control over more than 65 billion barrels of proven reserves, according to information published by the White House (The White House, 2026). Subsequently, on September 22, Delcy Rodríguez participated in the United Nations General Assembly, where she delivered Venezuela's official address to representatives of the Member States, signaling renewed engagement with the multilateral organization (Reuters Connect, 2026). Finally, on September 23, Rodríguez met with President Donald Trump. The meeting was also attended by Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, and other senior US officials (Cohen & Párraga, 2026).

In summary, these developments, spanning more than 20 years through the most recent events of 2026, illustrate how relations between the United States and Venezuela evolved from political and diplomatic confrontation to the imposition of economic sanctions, a US military intervention, and, subsequently, the signing of oil agreements and the resumption of high-level meetings. These events marked a turning point in bilateral relations and paved the way for a new strategic relationship characterized by transactional interests, increased bilateral cooperation, and a degree of political rapprochement that would have been unthinkable before Maduro's capture.



LOCAL

Offensive and Peace-Oriented Strategies Against Organized Crime in Colombia: An Approach Based on Theory and Historical Experience

Throughout international and Colombian history, different methods have been used to confront and attempt to eradicate organized crime and armed groups, ranging from policies of direct confrontation and the strengthening of military and police capabilities to strategies based on dialogue, negotiation, and peacebuilding.

In Colombia, with the recently inaugurated president Abelardo De La Espriella, an approach centered on direct confrontation with criminal organizations has been reinstated. This approach is characterized by a tougher policy and greater use of military and police capabilities. It contrasts with the approach adopted under Gustavo Petro's administration, from 2022 to August 2026, when security policy was accompanied by the so-called Total Peace policy and efforts to establish dialogue and negotiation mechanisms with different armed actors,

although this did not entail the complete abandonment of operations by the security forces.

A similar emphasis on dialogue and negotiation had been pursued during Juan Manuel Santos's administration, from 2010 to 2018. During this period, one of the most significant advances toward negotiations with armed groups was achieved, particularly with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia–People's Army (FARC-EP). The process culminated in the signing of the Final Peace Agreement in 2016. In this regard, the current security landscape bears greater similarities to the administration of Álvaro Uribe Vélez, who served as president from 2002 to 2010 and implemented the Democratic Security Policy, based on strengthening the security forces and pursuing a strategy of confrontation against illegal armed groups.



Regarding the different approaches to national security policy, political theory has developed various perspectives on their functionality, implementation, and outcomes. This analysis examines these approaches by comparing the administrations of Álvaro Uribe Vélez, Juan Manuel Santos, and Gustavo Petro through statistical indicators related to violence, armed conflict, and security. The aim is to assess the effectiveness of direct confrontation, dialogue, negotiation, and peacebuilding strategies in reducing the capabilities of armed and criminal organizations, identify their main outcomes, benefits, and limitations, and establish criteria for evaluating the security approach adopted by Abelardo De La Espriella's government in its efforts to combat organized crime in Colombia.

To analyze the impact of the security policies implemented by these administrations, several variables must be considered to enable a comparison of their outcomes. The main indicators include the number of members of criminal and armed organizations, particularly those with the greatest historical prominence in the country, such

as the FARC-EP and its various dissident factions; trends in cocaine trafficking, considered one of the main sources of funding for illegal organizations in Colombia; and the number of homicides recorded during each presidential term. An integrated analysis of these variables provides a basis for assessing the impact of the different security strategies implemented in Colombia.

Beginning with the homicide rate, a historical review shows that the number of homicides declined consecutively between 2003 and 2010, during Álvaro Uribe's two presidential terms, which spanned 2002 to 2010. During this period, under the Democratic Security Policy and through a direct confrontation strategy led primarily by the Armed Forces and the National Police, homicides decreased by 14.08% between 2003 and 2004, 10.38% between 2004 and 2005, 3.48% between 2005 and 2006, 1.60% between 2006 and 2007, 6.15% between 2007 and 2008, 1.98% between 2008 and 2009, and 5.08% between 2009 and 2010. These reductions brought the number of recorded homicides in Colombia down from 23,523 in 2003 to 15,013 in 2010, representing 8,510 fewer cases over the period, equivalent to a 36.18% decrease (Gutiérrez Restrepo, 2025).

It is worth noting that, although homicides declined progressively during these years, the absolute figures remained high compared with those recorded during the other administrations analyzed. Nevertheless, these results must be interpreted in light of the security context of the first decade of the 2000s, which was characterized by an intense internal armed conflict and the presence and activity of various illegal armed organizations.

Under Juan Manuel Santos, the total number of homicides recorded during his two presidential terms followed a mixed pattern, with both increases and decreases, although declines predominated throughout most of his administration. Between 2010 and 2011, homicides increased by 5.26%, followed by a further increase of 1.45% between 2011 and 2012. Subsequently, homicides decreased by 6.62% between 2012 and 2013 and by 13.45% between 2013 and 2014. They also fell by 3.84% between 2014 and 2015, followed by an additional reduction of 2.38% between 2015 and 2016. Between 2016 and 2017, there was a marginal decrease of 0.75%, while between 2017 and 2018, the final year of his administration, homicides increased again by 4.89%.

This mixed pattern of percentage increases and decreases ultimately resulted in a reduction in the total number of homicides, from 15,803 cases in Santos's first full year in office to 12,667 in 2018. This represents a

decrease of 3,136 cases over the period, equivalent to a 19.85% reduction (Ministerio de Justicia de Colombia, 2026).

During Gustavo Petro's presidential term, which began in 2022 and extended into part of 2026, the number of recorded homicides followed a mixed pattern. Between 2022 and 2023, homicides increased by 0.14%, while between 2023 and 2024, the total number decreased by 0.44%. Subsequently, between 2024 and 2025, homicides increased again by 4.01%. For 2026, only the first seven months of the year can be analyzed, as these constitute the most recent data available from open sources. During this period, homicides increased by 29.03% compared with the same months in 2025 (Policía Nacional de Colombia, 2026). In aggregate terms, comparing the first and last full years of the administration under review reveals an increase of 501 homicides, from 13,536 cases in 2022 to 14,037 in 2025, representing a 3.70% increase between the two years.

Based on these results, Álvaro Uribe's administration achieved the greatest proportional and absolute reduction in homicides, both in terms of the number of cases and the percentage decrease, when comparing the first and last full years of his presidency. Moreover, it was the only one of the three administrations in which homicides declined consecutively every year.



In contrast, Gustavo Petro was the only one of the three presidents whose administration recorded an increase in homicides when comparing its first and last full years in office. This outcome occurred under a security policy that relied predominantly on dialogue, negotiation, and efforts to establish peace processes. Juan Manuel Santos's administration, meanwhile, ended with the lowest absolute number of homicides among the three administrations when comparing the first and last full years of his presidency, under a security policy that combined military offensives with peace processes.

Although the number of homicides is a key indicator for identifying changes in security conditions and the population's exposure to lethal violence, its trends must be analyzed alongside other indicators to determine the specific impact of security policies on organized crime. In particular, homicide figures do not directly measure the scale of the illicit economies that sustain criminal organizations. Analyzing these economies is important for determining whether a security strategy addresses the structural causes that allow such organizations to reproduce themselves, rather than focusing exclusively on reducing some of their main symptoms, such as lethal violence (Brombacher, 2012).

For this reason, cocaine hydrochloride seizures must also be analyzed. During Álvaro Uribe's two presidential terms, from 2002 to 2010, a total of 1,346,679.78 kg of cocaine hydrochloride was seized.

During Juan Manuel Santos's two terms, from 2010 to 2018, seizures reached a total of 2,275,128.76 kg. Finally, during Gustavo Petro's four years in office, seizures totaled 3,674,684.74 kg, making his administration the one with the highest absolute volume of cocaine hydrochloride seized among the three governments analyzed (Observatorio de Drogas de Colombia, 2026).

However, these figures must be assessed in proportion to the area devoted to coca cultivation, since a larger cultivated area can increase the availability of raw materials for cocaine production and consequently affect the potential volume of seizures. During Álvaro Uribe's two presidential terms, a cumulative total of 742,061 hectares of coca crops was recorded, while Juan Manuel Santos's two terms saw a cumulative total of 873,423 hectares (UNODC, n.d.).

In Gustavo Petro's case, the official sources available for this analysis cover only 2022, 2023, and 2024, during which a cumulative total of 744,027.62 hectares of coca crops was recorded (UNODC, 2024). This means that, in just three years, the cumulative area of coca cultivation recorded under Petro exceeded that recorded during Uribe's eight years in office. Therefore, the greater absolute volume of seizures recorded

during Petro's administration must also be interpreted in light of the larger area devoted to coca cultivation during the period under review, rather than treating absolute seizure figures as the sole indicator of effectiveness.

Furthermore, political theory and the analysis of illicit economies suggest that drug seizures in producing countries do not necessarily represent a significant economic blow to criminal organizations, since the substance's value is relatively low at this stage of the supply chain. The economic impact is likely to be greater when drugs are seized after reaching their final destination, where their value has increased as a result of the costs associated with production, transportation, and distribution (Brombacher, 2010).

Another indicator that can help assess the potential economic and structural impact on criminal organizations is the number of people within their ranks. A reduction in membership could indicate a diminished economic capacity to sustain these individuals within the organizations and, at the same time, a decline in their human and operational capacity. Analyzing changes in membership therefore makes it possible to assess the extent to which the security policies implemented under each administration may have affected the military wings of these organizations.



Fuente: Noticias UNAL

In 2002, when Álvaro Uribe Vélez assumed the presidency, the FARC-EP was estimated to have a total of 20,766 members. By 2010, at the end of his two presidential terms, this figure had fallen to approximately 9,000 members. This represents a decrease of 56.67%, equivalent to 11,766 fewer people in the ranks of the organization (Noticias RCN, 2014).

At the beginning of Juan Manuel Santos's administration, the country had approximately 9,000 FARC-EP members. However, following the peace process conducted between his government and the FARC-EP, membership declined to approximately 4,857 by 2018. This represents a reduction of 46.03%, or 4,143 fewer members between his first year as president and the final year of his administration (Noticias RCN, 2022).

During Gustavo Petro's administration, the main FARC-EP dissident groups, including the Central General Staff (Estado Mayor Central, EMC) and the National Coordinator of the Bolivarian Army (Coordinadora Nacional Ejército Bolivariano, CNEB), grew from approximately 2,144 and 1,134 members in 2022 to 4,480 and 2,359 in 2026, respectively. These figures represent increases of 109% and 108%. This trend emerged under a policy focused primarily on dialogue and negotiation within the framework of Total Peace. Likewise, the combined membership of illegal armed organizations increased by 90%, rising from 15,120 members in 2022 to 28,802 in July 2026 (Fundación Ideas para la Paz, 2026). However, the latter figure is not comparable with those available for the other two administrations and will therefore be excluded from the comparison.



At this point, it can be established that Álvaro Uribe's administration recorded the largest absolute and percentage reduction in the membership of the FARC-EP and its subsequent dissident factions. Although the final membership figure recorded during his administration was higher than the figures subsequently observed among dissident groups under the other administrations compared, the comparison must account for the initial conditions of each period and, particularly, the scale of the reduction achieved relative to the situation inherited by each government. In this regard, the results suggest that the strategy implemented under Uribe achieved a greater reduction in the size of this armed structure, both in absolute and percentage terms.

Based on the foregoing, the administration whose security policy most closely resembles that of current president Abelardo

De La Espriella was also the one that achieved the greatest absolute and percentage reductions in the membership of the FARC-EP, the most capable armed organization during that period. It also recorded the largest absolute and percentage reductions in homicides, an indicator that can be understood as a manifestation of patterns of violence associated with the armed conflict and criminal activity. From a forward-looking perspective, it is therefore possible to envisage a scenario in which De La Espriella's administration achieves similar results, given that it has adopted a security policy with comparable features, characterized by greater operational capacity and more intensive use of the Armed Forces and the National Police in implementing security and defense policy.

Nevertheless, political theory also urges caution when assessing the ability of this offensive approach to the war against organized crime to eradicate it completely. If the origins of the problem and the foundations that allow these organizations to reproduce themselves are not addressed structurally, a vicious cycle may emerge in which authorities continue "cutting off the heads of a thousand-headed hydra." In other words, actions may weaken criminal organizations without necessarily eliminating them, affecting only part of their structure or some of their leaders (Brombacher, 2012).

Political theory also emphasizes the concept of the positive feedback effect of violence, according to which violence can generate further violence in certain contexts, including the fight against organized crime (Lessing, 2011). A hardline policy based on direct confrontation relies primarily on the use of force, potentially triggering violent retaliation by armed groups against the government. These organizations may also resort to what is known as communicative violence, through which they seek to attract media attention to their acts of terror and violence in order to instill fear in the population and exert political pressure on the government over how it manages the conflict and security (Bailey & Taylor, 2009).

Instead, defeating this “thousand-headed monster” and ensuring its disappearance requires depriving criminal organizations of financial resources and assets, eliminating illicit crops, upholding the rule of law, and reducing corruption (Buitrago Arias, 2021). Accordingly, a security policy aimed at confronting organized crime should address both its visible manifestations and symptoms, such as violence and the operational capabilities of its structures, and the underlying conditions that enable its reproduction, particularly the illicit economies that provide the resources needed to sustain its members. In other words, the problem must be addressed through a multidimensional approach that combines coercive and operational measures with an analysis of the social, economic, and institutional conditions that allow organized crime to persist.



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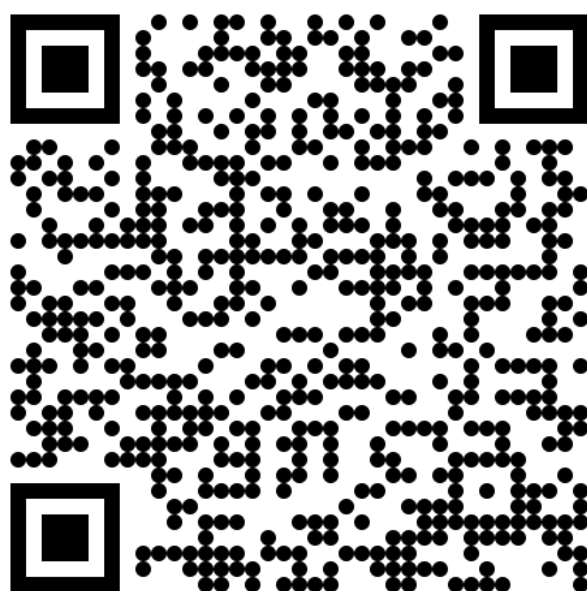
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