

Special Political and Decolonization Committee (SPECPOL)

Topic A:

The question of resolving territorial disputes arising from the residual effects of colonialism.



I. Introduction of topic:

The mid-20th century marked a period where various countries freed themselves from colonial rule. However, despite this apparent development, colonial tendencies continue to retain control over territories, causing territorial disputes. The United Nations Special Committee on Decolonization, founded in the year 1961, has hence been helping former colonies to gain independence.

According to the United Nations, in 1945, 750 million people lived in territories controlled by colonial powers (United Nations).

The Charter of the United Nations is the founding document of the United Nations, which aims to promote international peace and security. In Article 1 of the Charter of the United Nations, it is clearly stated that “The decolonization efforts of the United Nations derive from the principle of “equal rights and self-determination of people””. This principle is further developed in the other three specific chapters of the Charter. (Charter).

Since then, the United Nations has adopted resolutions to bring colonialism in all its forms and manifestations to a definitive end, to allow all people a right to self-determination (United Nations).

However, despite efforts, 17 Non-Self-Governing territories remain on the agenda of the Special Committee of Decolonization due to territorial disputes and control over territories. Member states still assume responsibilities for the administration of such

territories and impede territories from attaining full measures of self-government (Non-Self-Governing).

This paper will discuss in detail the work that still needs to be done to eradicate the residual effects of colonialism, such as territorial disputes. This mainly includes following and providing supportive actions for the development of Non-Self-Governing territories and disseminating information on and to the Non-Self-Governing territories (*What the UN Can Do to Assist Non-Self-Governing Territories*).

II. Definition of key terms:

Colonization: Process of establishing control over territories and populations.

Colonizers: A country that establishes political control over a territory and its population.

Colonies: Territories and populations under the control of another country.

Decolonization: The undoing of colonialism to establish the freedom of colonized states.

Territorial disputes: Disagreement between two or more countries about which state exercises sovereignty over a certain territory.

Administrative powers: Foreign powers which remain in control of non-self-governing territories. They seek benefits from non-self-governing people and resources.

Non-Self-Governing Territories: Defined as a territory whose people are not self-governing.

United Nations (UN): Supra-national organization founded in 1945 by the victors of WW2. It succeeded the League of Nations and today every universally recognized country is a member of it.

United Nations Special Committee on Decolonization: Established by the General Assembly in 1962, in regard to the implementation of the declaration on the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples.

Peacekeeping: Is an activity undertaken by the United Nations to maintain international peace and security globally.

III. Background information:

It is important to clarify, that even though the residual effects of colonization persist in some territories, the wave of decolonization that swept the world in the latter half of the 20th century led to one of the greatest liberating movements in history.

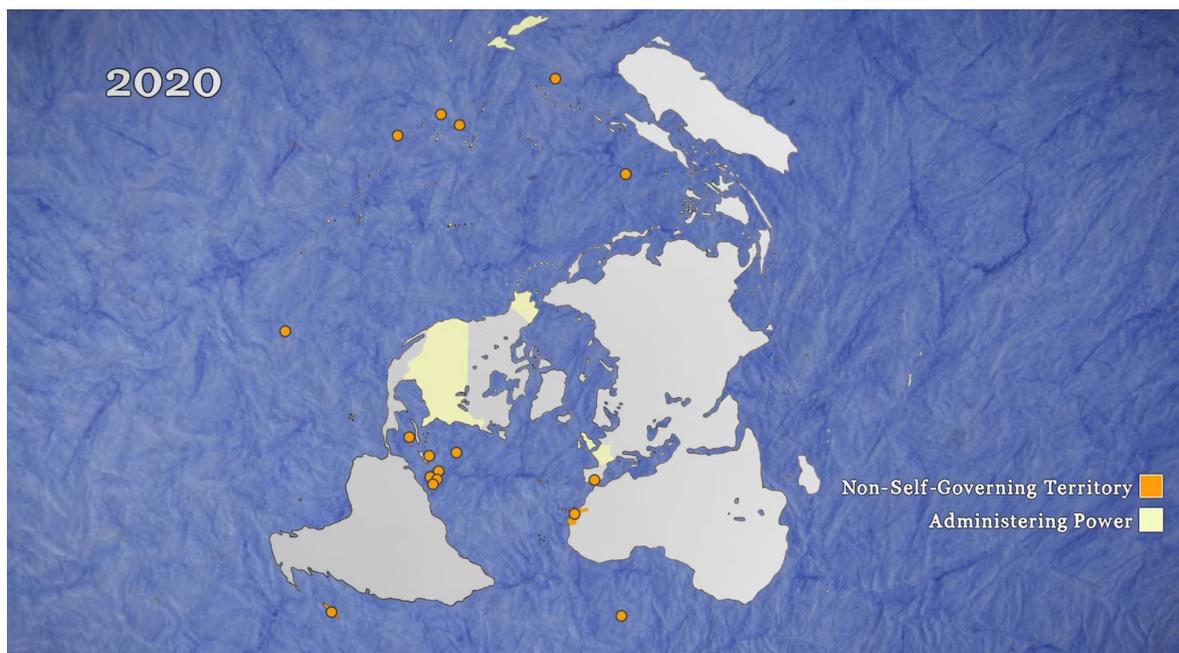
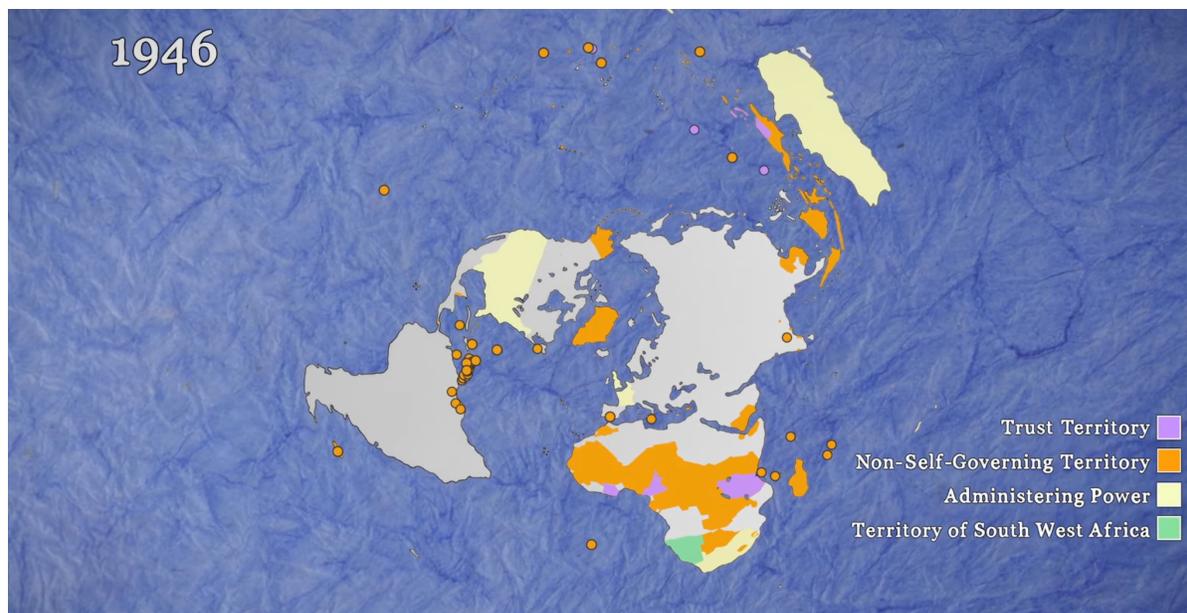
Modern colonization began during the Age of Discovery. Portugal, at the start of the 15th century, began looking for new civilizations and trade routes outside of Europe, and soon after that, Portuguese explorers conquered various territories, including Cape Verde. Portugal's rival nation, Spain, eventually started exploring new territories too. Spain and Portugal consequently started competing for new territories and took over multiple indigenous lands in India, Africa, Asia, and the Americas.

The growth of European colonies in the new world eventually continued. Other countries, including France, England, The Netherlands, and Germany, began their own building overseas and fought against Spain and Portugal for lands already conquered.

During the 18th and 19th centuries, most colonized countries eventually managed to gain independence, beginning with the American revolution in 1766, and the Haitian revolution in 1781. As a result, starting in the 1880s, European nations started focusing on conquering African lands and racing one another for resources and colonies. European nations continued colonizing Africa, until 1914, when the period of decolonization started, and their colonial empires began to be challenged until 1975 (Blakemore).

Despite the power of colonial powers, countries staged resistance to their conquerors. Territories fought for their independence, and many gained self-rule. However, sovereignty did not liberate them from imperial influences. Administrative powers desired new governments to keep boundaries created during colonial times. When the UN was eventually formed at the end of WW2, non-self-governing countries were significantly helped to reach total self-dominance. In 1946, 72 non-self-governing territories were under the control of administrative authorities, and in 2020, 17

non-self-governing territories remained. Hence, the UN helped to promote significant progress, however, the residual impacts of colonialism persist due to administrative powers, and the history of colonization (Nations).



The residual impacts of colonialism are still being felt today in the 17 non-self-governing remaining territories, however, residual impacts of colonialism are also found in many areas that were once colonized; Africa, the Balkans, and Southeast Asia. Administrative powers still project dispossession on populations, resources, and

territories, which creates numerous issues including conflicts involving borders, human rights violations, ethnic rivalry, and the uneven distribution of resources.

Conflicts over territorial boundaries are large residual impacts of colonization. Before colonization, nations had not existed within colonial borders. Most of the territories colonized had indeed not existed at all as nations. However, through colonial conquest, satellite borders were established with little or no regard for the social reality of indigenous populations. Eventually, many of the governments of postcolonial territories maintained territorial boundaries established by past administrative powers. Consequently, many disputes have arisen between nations, to obtain control over territories and borders. Nations with disputes, justify their control over a certain area based on historical boundaries. For example, the Libya-Chad conflict involves a territorial dispute over the Aouzou Strip. Libya justifies its claims to the area based on ancient historical boundaries. Instead, Chad justifies its claims to the area, based on boundaries established during the colonial period (corissajoy).

Administrative powers have often created situations to encourage ethnic rivalry, which is now another large residual impact of colonization. Sometimes, administrative powers would favor one ethnic or religious group over other groups in the region. This promoted inter-group rivalries, and created disputes. Consequently, hostilities and hatred between ethnic groups escalated, and continue to prevail in some populations. For example, the conflict between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots was encouraged by British colonial rule. The British colonials would often use the and pushed Turkish and Greek populations to combat, as a means of maintaining control of Cyprus. By the time the British colonials left the island in 1960, a deep division was cleaved in the nation. Decades later, ethnic rivalries that were encouraged by British colonials, continue to impact Cyprus's population (corissajoy).

The practice of favoring one group over another in a nation also contributed to the unequal distribution of resources, which still prevails in territories nowadays. Privileged groups had access to important resources and consequently would develop faster. This resulted in the wealth of territories being distributed only to particular regions. And today, post-colonial states continue to favor these privileged groups, which creates inequality and disputes within populations. For example, countries such as South Africa,

are favored by governments because they have European settler populations (corissajoy).

Human rights are nowadays denied to many populations, as a result of the unjust policies that administrative powers subjected colonized populations to. Many post-colonial governments have indeed adopted unjust colonial policies to preserve their dominance. Rights in regard to lands, resources, and more are denied to many, most notably indigenous populations which were marginalized under colonial rule. Mass murder, human rights violations, and genocide can still be found in states such as Rwanda, Cambodia, and El Salvador (corissajoy).

Consequently, colonization also led to a lack of governmental skills and experience. As colonized states were governed from either abroad or by a domestic privileged group, when liberation came, states lacked the skills and structures to create good governance systems. As a result, many post-colonized states have bad, corrupted governance, or are still ruled by foreign regimes, which greatly impacts the development of these nations (corissajoy).

IV. Previous attempts at solving the issue

When the United Nations was established in 1945, 750 million people lived in non-self-governing territories. As a result, the Charter of the United Nations established in Chapter XI (Articles 73-74), the principles that guide the organization's decolonization efforts, including having respect for the self-determination of all populations.

The United Nations established the International Trusteeship system in Chapter XII (Articles 86-91), to monitor territories known as "Trust" territories (territories placed under administrative authorities by the Trusteeship Council of the UN).

The Charter obliged administrative powers to convey to the UN information on conditions in the Territories. The General Assembly, to promote the progress of decolonization, voluntarily placed administrative States under the system by States responsible for the administration of territories.

The Charter also binds administrative Powers to recognize and promote the social, economic, political, and educational progress in territories, and to take into account the

Declaration on decolonization (the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples), adopted in 1960, which states that all people have a right to self-determination and states that colonialism should be brought to an unconditional end.

In 1962, the General Assembly established the Special Committee on Decolonization, to monitor the implementation of the Declaration and to make recommendations on its implementation.

In 1990, the General Assembly declared 1990-2000 as the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism and adopted a Plan of Action. In 2001, the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism was declared. In 2011, the third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism was declared.

The Special Committee on Decolonization, (i) “keeps the political, economic and social situation in Non-Self-Governing Territories under review; (ii) “provides information on territorial developments; (iii) “facilitates Territory specific decolonization processes underway; (iv) offers advice on the decolonization options under the Declaration; (v) “conducts annual regional seminars for a face-to-face discussion with territorial and civil society representatives as well as experts; and (vi) dispatches fact-finding and advisory visiting missions to Territories” (*What the UN Can Do to Assist Non-Self-Governing Territories*).

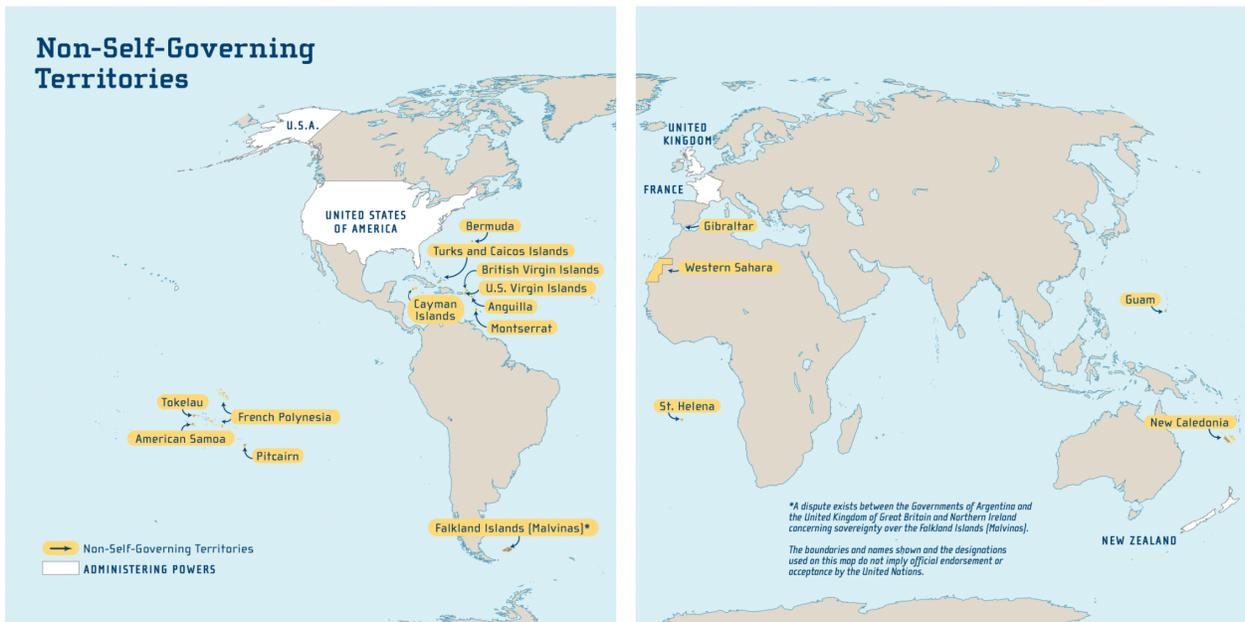
The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all members of the United Nations in 2015, provides 17 Sustainable Development Goals, which recognize that ending deprivations must go along with strategies that improve health, and education, reduce inequality and promote economic growth. These goals are indirectly combating some of the residual effects of colonization, by combating poverty, providing education, providing health, promoting economic growth, reducing inequalities, and by implementing peace, justice, and strong institutions.

V. Agencies involved:

To this day matters regarding the abolition of colonialism and its residual effects, have been almost exclusively handled by the Special Committee on Decolonization, also known as C-24. They have direct oversight over the situation of non-self-governing territories worldwide, and the implications of colonization in post-colonized states.

VI. Main countries involved:

According to the United Nations Secretariat 2016 Working Papers on Non-Self-Governing Territories, Western Sahara, Anguilla, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Falkland Islands, Montserrat, Saint Helena, Turks and Caicos Islands, United States Virgin Island, Gibraltar, American Samoa, French Polynesia, Guam, New Caledonia, Pitcairn, and Tokelau remain NSGTs. The main administering powers, in this case, include primarily the United Kingdom, the United States, France, and New Zealand (*What the UN Can Do to Assist Non-Self-Governing Territories*). .



However, countries which are not listed as NSGTs, who still experience major impacts of colonization are generally African countries, including Congo, Nigeria,

Cameroon, Chad, Libya, and Uganda. However, other countries experiencing impacts include India, and Haiti (there is a non-exhaustive list of post-colonized countries experiencing residual impacts of colonization).

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