LmunA 2024

Research report

Forum: General Assembly 4

Issue: Developing strategies for the decolonization of non-self-governing territories

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Introduction

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All throughout human history, imperialism and colonialism has played an important role in determining the fate of whole nations. Valuably, the drive for expansion led to the discoveries of various sea routes, continents, and technologies. However, although expansion benefited some, it harmed others. Starting in antiquity and until modern times expansion was a common cause of war and oppression. The dynamics between the invader and oppressed scarring the culture and the economy for decades. For example, DRC which was colonised in the late 19th century, currently struggles with poverty and a mismanagement of natural resources, as a result of poor development due to the exploitation and mistreatment by the coloniser (Britannica).

However, in the past 100 years the focus has shifted towards self-determination and creating stable economies. Following the liberal ideas of Woodrow Wilson, and the League of Nations' effort in establishing independent nation states, the United Nations have worked tirelessly to continue their legacy. Today, due to UNs effort toward establishing independent autonomous states, there are only 17 non-self-governing territories remaining.
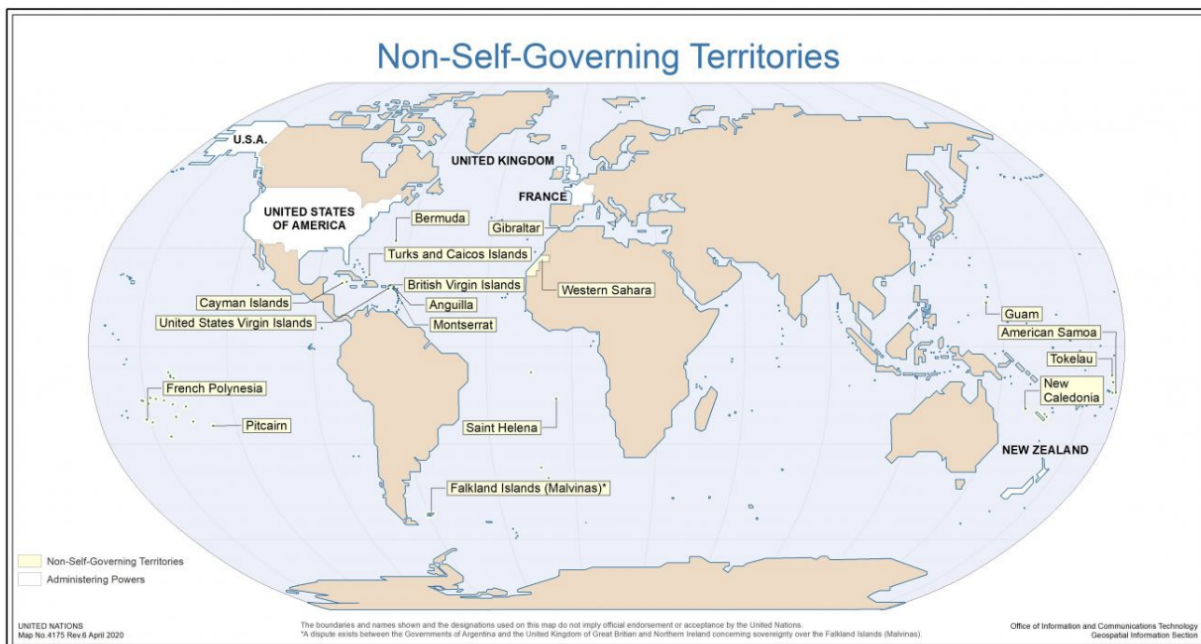

Figure 1 (United Nations, "Non-Self-Governing Territories | the United Nations and Decolonization")

Many historians and philosophers agree that 'all oppression creates a state of war'. Thus, as the NSGTs are currently unable to self-manage, it became UNs' mission to aid in establishing the autonomy of these regions to prevent any conflict which may arise. Although the remaining territories are not in a military state of war they are more vulnerable and exposed to economic, social, and environmental challenges. As visible through the progress made by the old colonies, it is clear that by continuing the UNs current policies and inventing new ones, there is a clear future of independence ahead of all nations around the globe.

This report will discuss the different strategies the UN has created to battle colonisation and to construct self-governing states around the globe, specifically the mandate system and the Trusteeship Council. As well as, will give a historical overview on the age of colonisation and the effects of oppression on the past and current world to allow the members of the GA4 to understand the issue better at hand.

Definitions of key terms

Colonisation: process in which a foreign aggressor occupies a certain territory and exploits the natural resources and people of the captured zone for their own benefit, most often leading to conflict, oppression, and loss of culture.

Non-self-governing Territories: defined by the UN Charter as 'territories whose people have not yet attained a full measure of self-government' and are under supervision of an administering power such as the USA, UK, New Zealand & France, who aim at aiding the territory to gain independence.

Administering powers/Mandatory powers: independent nations & members of the UN, namely USA, UK, New Zealand & France, which were assigned as supervisors to oversee the development of non-self-governing territories.

Self-determination: The process in which a territory/group of people established their own autonomy and sovereignty.

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Decolonization: The process of regaining independence, economic stability, & reestablishing cultural values from an invasive colonial power; historically speaking most commonly a European power.

General overview

All through human history many nations fell victim to an invasion, or were the ones invading; all borders constantly changing. Starting with early civilizations such as ancient Greece and Rome, imperialism and expansion were an important component of developing and establishing one's power (Kohn and Reddy). Such ideology of aggression has been maintained and upheld for centuries.

The age of colonialism saw one of the largest global expansions which involved the territorial growth of European powers. At the turn of the 19th century colonialism was at its peak; the European empires were expanding their borders overseas in Africa, Asia, & South America. The colonisation of Africa, 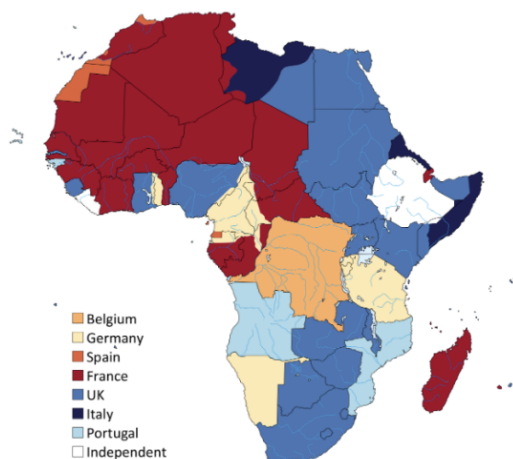also called the Scramble for Africa, experienced the largest expansion of the 19th century during which over 90% of the continent has been colonised and exploited by European powers (Finlayson). By the early 20th century 'a large majority of the nations worldwide has been colonised by Europeans at some point' throughout history (Blakemore). The age of colonialism brought on oppression, and tensions, where the 'nations slithered over the brink into the boiling cauldron of war without any trace of apprehension or dismay'(George).

Figure 2, Scramble for Africa (Finlayson)

Some historians argue that the Great War was inevitable, and imperialism and colonialism were the main cause for the international aggression. Preceding the war colonialism led to multiple clashes between the empires such as the Moroccan Crisis' and the Agadir Incident. However, although these tensions were deescalated, the July Crisis of 1914 acted as an ultimate catalyst for the Great War (Williamson and Dailey 22). The assasination of Austrian Archduke Ferdinand, which was the

main reason for war between Austria-Hungary and Serbia, was a consequence of years of oppression imposed by the Austro-Hungarian Empire on the Balkan people (Mombauer). The mistreatment of the natives built resentment towards the oppressors and inevitably led to a conflict.

After experiencing the horror of a modern war, in 1919 the global powers came together to establish a new peace. Aware of the tenacious relationships between the empires, as well as the colonisers and the colonised, the Paris Peace Conference focused on de-escalating colonial related stress, where the old colonial beliefs were challenged by the post war Woodrow Wilson self-determination and liberation ideologies. The 14 points which shaped the post war treaties were made by W.Wilson, who believed that establishing nation-states and aiding colonies in gaining autonomy is the key to a long lasting peace (Steiner 8). Thus, following the Treaties of Lousanne and Sévres the old German and Ottoman colonies were assigned to victor powers to supervise their development toward independence. This process, called the Mandate system, was meant to be managed by the League of Nations however it posed multiple issues (Steiner 33). Many of the mandatory powers saw the gained mandates as an extension of their empire instead of a nation in need of help in governing. Proceeding the age of colonialism, the desire for imperialistic growth was still fresh, thus, in the early 20th century the dream of free nation-states was unrealistic. By the late 1940s only 6 Class A mandates were able to gain independence; all in the Middle East (The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica).

However, post-WW2 and with the creation of the United Nations, a new wave of liberalism took over the politics of Europe. Continuing the Mandate System of the League of Nations, the UN Charter of 1945 created the Trusteeship System (United Nations, "Trusteeship Council"). Under Article 77 of the Charter, territories which applied for the Trusteeship System were: territories which were part of the mandate system,yet didn't manage to gain independence, territories which became detached from enemy states as a result of the Second World War', and any territories which were 'voluntarily placed under the system by the states' responsible for them (United Nations, "Trusteeship Council"). Different from the Mandate System, the Trusteeship additionally aimed at promoting educational, social, & economic advancements in support of the inhabitants of the trust territories, as well as, encouraging respect of human rights and 'independence of the people of the world'. Additionally, the UN created the Trusteeship Council to supervise the progress and required regular reports on the development of the trust territories to prevent the administering powers from overusing their influence, as well as create territory specific tactics to address the main issues faced by each nation.

Eleven territories were placed under the Trusteeship System: Togoland under Britain, Togoland under France, Cameroon under Britain, Cameroon under France, Ruanda-Urundi,

Somaliland, Tanganyika, Western Samoa, Nauru, New Guinea/Papua New Guinea, Pacific Islands (United Nations, "Trusteeship Council"). By 1994 all Trust Territories either joined a neighboring country or obtained autonomy.

Additionally, to support the efforts of the Trusteeship Council, in 1961 following the resolution 1514 called the 'Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples'; a special Committee on Decolonization was formed, which is also known as C-24.

In 1946, the UN General Assembly noted 72 territories to which Chapter XI of the UN Charter applied. Currently, there are only 17 non-self-governing territories left and under the supervision of France, USA, UK, New Zealand, the UN is hopeful that they will soon achieve independence (Figure 1) (United Nations, "Non-Self-Governing Territories | the United Nations and Decolonization"). As of now, C-24 continues meeting annually and engages in multiple visiting missions to best aid the NSGTs in facing challenges such as climate change, access to health care, and scarcity of natural resources and water (United Nations, "Ensuring…"). The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is hopeful that the UN can reach their goal of full independence of all nations by that year (United Nations, "Ensuring…").

According to William Easterly, an American economist, literature suggests that European colonisation did aid in developing the global education, culture, and economy; predicted 47% of global development can be attributed to Europeans alone (Easterly). Although that development was intended to benefit the colonists more than the inhabitants of the annexed territory, it nevertheless aided in the global development. Additionally, given the positive results of the Trusteeship System and C-24, it's clear that further European & 1st World Countries involvement in decolonization efforts can lead to fruitful success. At the start of UNs decolonization effort almost a third of the World lived in colonies, however, since then, over 80 territories were able to gain independence, with only 17 remaining (United Nations, "Ensuring…) The C-24 and GA4 are positive that with further focus on decolonization and self-determination these territories can become autonomous nations.

Major parties involved

C-24: The C-24 made in 1961 is a special committee made to implement resolutions 1514 and 1654 which focused on decolonization efforts. It continues to exist and serves as the main forum

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of communication for the NSGTs, UN, and the Administrative powers (United Nations, "Special Committee).

General Assembly 4: One of the main committees of the UN, with a main focus on decolonization. Supervises the work of C-24 as well as reviews NSGTs petitions (United Nations, "Special Committee).

Non-self-governing Territories (NSGTs): Territories which are under the supervision of the UN, with an aim of gaining independence with the support of C-24 and the administering powers, namely; USA, UK, France, and New Zealand. There are 17 NSGTs left: Western Sahara, Anguilla, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Island, Falkland Islands, Montserrat, Saint Helena, Turks and Caicos Islands, United States Virgin Islands, Gibraltar, American Samoa, French Polynesia, Guam, New Caledonia, Pitcairn, and Tokelau. Most of them in the Caribbean Sea region (United Nations, "Ensuring…).

Administrative Powers: Namely USA, UK, France, and New Zealand, took on the task of supervising the development of the remaining Non-self-governing Territories (United Nations, "Trusteeship Council").

Caribbean Community (CARICOM): advocated for the decolonization of Caribbean territories; a majority of NSGTs is located in this region. Works on a similar basis as UN and collaborates with local and regional organisations with a similar goal in mind (CARICOM).

Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF): A french organisation which focuses specifically on french speaking regions and advocates for such regions and NSGTs. It promotes collaboration and economical, social, and educational development across the french speakers around the world (Organisation Internationale De La Francophonie).

Timeline of Key Events

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Pre 1900s	Rise of Colonialism and the expansion of European empires starting with the Crusades and the discovery of the Americas, followed by the Scramble for Africa and further expansion in Asia (Kohn and Reddy).
1914-1918	The First World War served as an opportunity for colonised and oppressed nations such as Poland and Yugoslavia to fight for their autonomy, relying on the chaotic vacuum of power of war to gain influence (Williamson and Dailey 104).
1919	The signing of the Treaty of Versailles post WW1, which has established new reforms concerning decolonisation and along with Wilson's 14 points, began a public favour towards independent nation states and their sovereignty (The National WWI Museum and Memorial).
	Creation of the Mandate System by the League of Nations, where the former German and Ottoman colonies and territories were assigned to different Allied powers to govern until the mandate was deemed capable of self government (Williamson and Dailey 156).
1941	Publishment of the Atlantic Charter by the representatives of USA and Britain stating their future goals and aims of promoting self-governing and autonomy of territories annexed during the war (NATO).
1945-6	Establishment of the United Nations succeeding the League of Nations.
	Creation of the UN Charter and the international Trusteeship System; aimed at 'promoting advancement of the inhabitants' towards self-governance supervised by the P5 members (namely China, Russia, UK, USA, France (United Nations, "Trusteeship Council").
1960	The UN General Assembly adopts Resolution 1514, known as the 'Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples' calling for an end of colonialism (United Nations, "Non-Self Governing Territories").
1961	Based on Resolution 1654 formation of the special Committee on the situation with regard to the Implementation of the 'Declaration on the Granting of Independence to the Colonial Countries and Peoples' also 'Special Committee on Decolonization' or C-24 (United Nations, "Non-Self Governing Territories").

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1963	Establishment of OAU the Organisation of African Unity, focusing on tl collaboration of African countries to establish independent states and er colonisation and apartheid (Tekle).
2018	Continuation of C-24 efforts in decolonization of NSGTs and establishme of annual visiting missions by the Special Committee,
	56th anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1514, and strengthen efforts raising awareness about the remaining NSGTs through reviving tl celebration of the week of solidarity along with a series of activities to brir attention to these territories (United Nations, "Ensuring…").
2024	This year 11 sessions were held from February to June with 22 dra resolutions, involving both clauses concerning general and territory specif matters.

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Previous attempts to solve the issue

This report will cover the Mandate System, Trusteeship System, and the current work of C-24.

Mandate System (Steiner):

 The mandate system was established as part of the Paris Peace Treaty of 1919 and specifically the sub-treaties of Lausanne and Sévres. They aimed at decolonizing and creating autonomous states out of old Ottoman and German colonies acquired post-WW1 by the Allied powers (43).

Depending on the stage of the development of the colonies they were divided into 3 categories: A, B, and C. 'A' mandates were the territories which were to obtain independence in a short period of time, thus receiving only administrative advice and assistance (43). 'B' mandates which were less developed were placed under direct rule of a mandatory power, and 'C' mandates were the least developed and separated into multiple fractions to help to maintain supervision over smaller areas, which allowed for a close focus on the local needs (44).

However, this system was flawed. The League required annual reports on the development of the mandates, yet had no power to enforce the decolonization plan, powerless to the actions of the mandatory powers (44). The Austrian Prime Minister; William Hughes, feared that due to the lack of proper enforcement the 'C' mandates posed as little more than war-annexed territories, and considering the freshness of the colonial era, the mandatory powers were not up to task (44). Additionally, against Woodrow Wilsons' will, a racial-equality clause was not admitted by the mainly white court of 1919, further establishing the unequal balance of powers which shaped the oncoming failure of the Mandate System (44-45). Also, the administrating powers continually imposed their own cultural values and economical needs over the overall development of the territory. This attitude led to a slow process of development and further propelled racism. Lastly, the system itself was made in a rush, which some argue was one of the reasons for the Japanese and German aggression. Germany believes that their colonies were wrongly annexed from their empire, whereas Japan was not included in administering any mandates which they believed was caused by European racism (45). Nevertheless, the already flawed system did not get a chance to make a change or be improved as the League's efforts were abruptly stopped by the outbreak of the Second World War.

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Trusteeship System (United Nations, "Trusteeship Council"):

Post-WW2 many of the colonies, such as India and Pakistan, were able to gain independence as they were economically independent from their colonisers. However, the remaining territories became part of the Trusteeship System.

As mentioned in the general overviews, this was a continuation of the mandate system, however, different from the Leagues they focused on only 11 territories. Due to the decrease in the imperialistic drive and the growth of liberal ideologies it became more likely that self-determination will be achieved. Although the 11 territories were not the only NSGTs left, through proper supervision and aid from the UN these territories were able to all gain independence by 1994. This shows great promise for the remaining 17 territories. With a small number of the territories within this system, the Trusteeship Council was able to focus on specific issues specialised for the needs and priorities of a territory.

C-24/Special Committee on Decolonization (United Nations, "Special Committee on Decolonization | the United Nations and Decolonization"):

The C-24 formed in 1960 following resolutions 1514 and 1654 became one of the main players of the global decolonization efforts. Similar to the trusteeship system, C-24 has currently only 17 territories left to maintain, thus can focus on territory specific needs. Additionally, to the previous efforts, C-24 organises visiting missions, which different from the Mandate System allows them to have a full knowledge and control over the administrative work of the mandatory powers. For example, in 1965 for C-24 first mission they travelled to supervise the elections on the Cook Islands and the most recent in 2019 to Montserrat to aid the community affected by the erupting volcano. Also, C-24 organised annual sessions which focus on raising awareness concerning decolonization and the development of non-self-governing territories, which promotes collaboration and gains supporters for their cause.

Possible solutions

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Economic weakness: Addressing the issue of the interdependence of the administering power and the NSGT: Historically speaking, many colonists invested in economies which benefited their own economy, thus after years of colonisation the needs of the coloniser became a priority and overtook the economy. This can heavily weaken the economy as it lacks essential markets, and creates a dependency on one specific product. This can be resolved by encouraging awareness and investing in new diverse products.

Adaptation and Mitigation: Many NSGTs are more exposed and vulnerable to climate change and natural disasters due to the lack of a proper government which can put such tactics in place. If the NSGT is unable to create a diplomatic body to take care of such matters, it gains support and help from an administrative power which has both the knowledge and funds to establish a safety net against such crises. Such effort would allow for a quicker development as the territories become less vulnerable.

Further reading

2024 C-24 resolutions and efforts towards helping specific NSGTs

Indiana Univerity Press Essay concering the decolonization of Africa

The 2023 Pacific Regional Seminar on Decolonization Efforts

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