



Dear Delegates,

My name is Miller Tan and I am a sophomore majoring in Chemistry. I started getting involved in Model UN after I volunteered last year and really enjoyed observing the different committees in my free time. Outside of Model UN, I am currently working in a research group to synthesize different organic and inorganic meta-phosphate based compounds. Feel free to ask me about it if you have the chance!

My name is Miana Smith and I am a freshman. Please let me know if you have any questions about MIT!

We're debating some great topics, and we hope that you have a wonderful weekend! This is a chance to expand your horizons, make new friends, and learn new things! Looking forward to meeting all of you during conference!

Sincerely,

Miana Smith and Miller Tan

## Committee Overview

The Special Political and Decolonization Committee (the Fourth Committee, also SPECPOL) deals with many issues not addressed by the First Committee, with a focus on those relating to decolonization and sovereignty. SPECPOL maintains the self-governance and self-determination of all territories as a goal.<sup>1</sup> These values are specifically enumerated in Article 73, Chapter XI of the UN Charter:

- a.** to ensure, with due respect for the culture of the peoples concerned, their political, economic, social, and educational advancement, their just treatment, and their protection against abuses;
- b.** to develop self-government, to take due account of the political aspirations of the peoples, and to assist them in the progressive development of their free political institutions, according to the particular circumstances of each territory and its peoples and their varying stages of advancement;
- c.** to further international peace and security;
- d.** to promote constructive measures of development, to encourage research, and to co-operate with one another and, when and where appropriate, with specialized international bodies with a view to the practical achievement of the social, economic, and scientific purposes set forth in this Article; and
- e.** to transmit regularly to the Secretary-General for information purposes, subject to such limitation as security and constitutional considerations may require, statistical and other information of a technical nature relating to economic, social, and educational conditions in the territories for which they are respectively responsible other than those territories to which Chapters XII and XIII apply.<sup>2</sup>

SPECPOL consists of all UN member states and has existed in its current form since 1993, when it was created by combining two other committees. It is worth noting that SPECPOL resolutions function as recommendations and that SPECPOL itself is not mandated to carry out military action.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “UN Charter.” United Nations, United Nations, [www.un.org/en/sections/un-charter/un-charter-full-text/](http://www.un.org/en/sections/un-charter/un-charter-full-text/).

<sup>2</sup> “UN Charter”

<sup>3</sup> “Special Political and Decolonization (Fourth Committee.” United Nations, United Nations, <http://www.un.org/en/ga/fourth/>

## Topic A: Issue of Gibraltar

**Committee Goals:** In relation to the issue at hand, the goals of this committee in accordance to Chapter XI Article 73 encourage the development of self-government so long as it does not contradict United Nations General Assembly Resolution 1514 which states, “any attempt aimed at the partial or total disruption of the national unity and the territorial integrity of a country is incompatible with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations”. Argue the positions presented (or other logical ones) that align with the doctrines of this committee.

**Introduction:** During efforts of decolonization on a global scale through the UN Decolonization Committee in the 1960s, Spain raised the issue of Gibraltar having been a core province on the Iberian Peninsula. Despite efforts to encourage decolonization, the Gibraltar territory has staunchly favored its continued relationship with Great Britain. Great Britain has continually given more autonomy to its territories over the years however Gibraltar has not showed any intention of declaring independence. There have been talks between Great Britain and Spain on the status of Gibraltar but not until recently was Gibraltar given a seat at these discussions.<sup>4</sup> With regard to recent events such as Brexit and the Catalan Independence Movement, the status of Gibraltar should once again be brought to the attention of the UN to further discuss and elucidate this issue.

### Background:

The Territory of Gibraltar has maintained a disputed status of what degree of sovereignty it should have. Initially a Spanish province, in the Treaty of Utrecht -which ended the War of Spanish Succession (1701-14) - Gibraltar was ceded to British control and has since been an area of strategic importance for naval operations to modern day.<sup>5</sup> There have been multiple attempts to better establish the status of Gibraltar; whether it lay under the government of Great Britain, Spain, or gain its own independence. During the 1960s, the UN pushed for decolonization with Spain raising this issue in SPEC POL. Unlike other territories, Gibraltar has had favorable relations with the UK yet cannot gain immediate independence with a provision in the Treaty of Utrecht that states “Gibraltar must be offered to Spain before any other relinquishment of authority by Great Britain”. This has been the main obstruction in efforts for end of British control of the territory.

### Factors to Consider

Spain and Gibraltar have not had positive relationships since it was ceded to Britain. Multiple military attempts to regain the territory throughout history have failed as well as a lasting political resentment between the two states with Spain not recognizing the Government of Gibraltar as a competent authority. Attempts to share sovereignty of Gibraltar between Great Britain and Spain such as in 2002 have been met with rejection by the people of Gibraltar

<sup>4</sup> Great Britain, House of Lords, Foreign Affairs Committee. “*Gibraltar: Time to get off the fence - Foreign Affairs Committee.*” <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmselect/cmfaaff/461/46106.htm>

<sup>5</sup> Reynolds, Paul. “Europe | Gibraltar and other empire leftovers.” *BBC News*, BBC, 3 Aug. 2004, [news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3528268.stm](https://www.bbc.com/news/europe-3528268).

through referendum. The Cordoba Agreement (2006) officially made Gibraltar an independent third party in talks between the two other nations but Spain has continued to insist sovereignty with solely Great Britain and not with Gibraltar. Spain has not demonstrated a supportive position to Gibraltar which should be considered in deliberations.

Economically, Gibraltar will be dealt a serious blow following its forced exit from the EU. Its economic relation with mainland Europe rests on goodwill from Spain to maintain open borders despite no longer being part of the trading bloc. 40% of jobs in Gibraltar are held by ‘frontier workers’, who commute from Spain to work in the territory which could see a harsh drop as a consequence of Brexit.<sup>6</sup> The Government of Gibraltar has raised the concerns that, after Brexit, when the UK is no longer present in Working Groups and other EU decision-making fora, Spain will be able to act with impunity in using EU law (such as that relating to Sites of Community Interest) to advance its territorial claims over Gibraltar.<sup>7</sup> The economic interests of Gibraltar are a significant factor in its status as a state and should be incorporated into discussions.

Great Britain statement regarding the dissolution of its territorial claims had been “to encourage greater autonomy and provided the means for any territory which seeks independence” and with regard to Gibraltar, “to never enter into sovereignty negotiations about which Gibraltar was not content”.<sup>8</sup> Spain has insisted that Gibraltar’s current status undermines its own unity and territorial integrity, while Gibraltar has insisted this cannot be the case due to not being part of the nation for more than 300 years.<sup>9</sup> Great Britain’s friendly stance towards Gibraltar as well as part of its economy relying on British military spending and infrastructure represent an important relationship in this issue.

Spanish response to the Catalan independence movement has been met with sharp criticism for its violent nature towards a peaceful process.<sup>10</sup> These actions will likely be similar should Gibraltar be forced to become a colony and then be allowed to try for independence. The UN must consider the ramifications for following through with previous treaties and predict & impose regulations for any change in the status of Gibraltar.

## Conclusions:

The status of Gibraltar has remained in flux between English territorial status, Spanish province, or independent state. Negotiations have so far relied on cooperation between Great Britain and Gibraltar which has increased the autonomy of Gibraltar whilst Spain maintains the positions that Gibraltar be returned to Spanish control. The issue that faces the UN is that Gibraltar in

<sup>6</sup> Great Britain, House of Lords, European Union Committee. Brexit: Gibraltar: *13th Report of Session 2016/17*. [www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201617/ldselect/ldcom/116/116.pdf](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201617/ldselect/ldcom/116/116.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

<sup>8</sup> “FOURTH COMMITTEE, CONCLUDING ITS GENERAL DEBATE ON DECOLONIZATION, RECOMMENDS NINE DRAFT RESOLUTIONS FOR ADOPTION BY GENERAL ASSEMBLY, INCLUDING ON WESTERN SAHARA | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases.” United Nations, United Nations, 15 Oct. 2007, [www.un.org/press/en/2007/gaspd375.doc.htm](http://www.un.org/press/en/2007/gaspd375.doc.htm).

<sup>9</sup> Ibid

<sup>10</sup> Delclós, Carlos. “Spanish Democracy vs. Catalonia’s Independence Vote.” *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 2 Oct. 2017, [www.nytimes.com/2017/10/02/opinion/catalonia-independence-referendum-spain.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/02/opinion/catalonia-independence-referendum-spain.html).

accordance with existing rules remains a “colony” and has yet to be resolved. Previous attempts to resolve the status of Gibraltar have been unsuccessful and so as left for Spain, Great Britain, and Gibraltar to deal with. However, with recent events such as Brexit and the Catalan Independence Movement, SPEC POL should once again discuss the issue of Gibraltarian sovereignty.

### **Possible Country Blocs and Positions:**

Great Britain, France, Germany, US:

Abstains from discussions reaffirming its position that the Gibraltar’s future is dependent solely on their own choices and not those of any other acting body.

Works to ensure Gibraltar independence with strong ties to Great Britain be maintained.

Spain and Mediterranean Countries:

Annexation: Gibraltar is of economic instability should it become fully independent (its economy is too small to survive alone) and so should be incorporated into Spain in accordance to the Treaty of Utrecht and geographic convenience.

European Union:

Joint sovereignty by UK and Spain. To ensure that Gibraltar remain economically incorporated with EU, it will be under partial Spanish domain (addresses frontier worked issue) while also maintains UK relations that prevent pressures from Spain to pursue annexation despite leaving the EU

NATO:

Gibraltar remains a naval site of strategic importance in the Mediterranean as well as near the Strait of Gibraltar. As such so long as its naval capacity is maintained, the sovereignty of Gibraltar is irrelevant.

Other States:

Regard self-determination to be the only recourse as Gibraltar has developed beyond colonial status (stance taken up by Argentina and Russian Federation). Essentially falls in line with UK stance on the issue.

\*Can take up other positions provided dependent on relations with those factions

Radical Position: Integrate Gibraltar into UK? Staunchly opposed by UK but props to you if you can make a cohesive argument for this.

### **Questions to Consider:**

- 1) Should the Treaty of Utrecht’s clause of initial Spanish control if Great Britain were to cede the territory be maintained? Especially consider the precedent this sets for other treaties.

- 2) Spain's reaction to an attempt for Catalan independence has been met with sharp criticism due to its violent nature. Compounding on historic relations between the two states, should Spain be prohibited from gaining control over Gibraltar?
- 3) Should Gibraltar continue to maintain its current relationship with Great Britain or pursue a different status? Factor in the effect of Brexit which forces Gibraltar to leave the EU due to its territorial status
- 4) Gibraltar remains on the short list of areas to be "decolonized" with the current charter in place. Should the "de-listing" of Gibraltar be executed instead?

### References:

- 1) [http://www.un.org/en/decolonization/pdf/CRP.16%20\(Gibraltar\).pdf](http://www.un.org/en/decolonization/pdf/CRP.16%20(Gibraltar).pdf)
- 2) <https://www.un.org/press/en/2007/gaspd375.doc.htm>
- 3) <https://www.un.org/press/en/2015/gacol3280.doc.htm>
- 4) <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/02/opinion/catalonia-independence-referendum-spain.html>
- 5) <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201617/ldselect/lddeucom/116/116.pdf>
- 6) <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3528268.stm>
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 Geographic Map of Gibraltar





Real World View of Gibraltar – Large Port City

<https://media1.britannica.com/eb-media/61/191561-004-057263C3.jpg>



Treaty of Utrecht

[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/1a/The\\_Treaty\\_of\\_Utrecht\\_%28clean%29.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/1a/The_Treaty_of_Utrecht_%28clean%29.jpg)



## Topic B: Nuclear Testing in French Polynesia

### Decolonization

There has been significant decolonization across the world since the establishment of the U.N. In 1945, approximately a third of the population lived in a colonial territory. Now, about two million people still live in non-self-governing territories.<sup>11</sup>

Seeing a decrease in the rate of decolonization, the U.N. declared the 1990s the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism and created SPECPOL to help further this goal. As the nineties ended, a Second Decade was declared, and now a Third Decade.

The remaining countries with colonial holdings are France, the UK, the USA, and New Zealand. The last state to become self-governing was East Timor in 2002. Seventeen states remain non-self-governing territories.<sup>12</sup>

### Reparations for Nuclear Testing

Nuclear testing was widespread during the Cold War, extensively damaging communities and the environment. Over the course of more than 2,000 weapons tests, many lives have been and will continue to be cut short due to radiation exposure. The long-term destruction of testing grounds and the regions near to them have impacted various communities' ability to live in and around that area.<sup>13</sup>

The issue of how to best address these long-lasting problems has been contentious. There have been conflicts over the acceptance of responsibility for damages and also over which party should bear the most responsibility for contending with the damages.

### French Polynesian Independence

French Polynesia is an overseas collectivity of France. It is sometimes also referred to as an "overseas country" (as contrasted to an "overseas territory" or an "overseas department") due its modern high degree of autonomy. French Polynesia consists of five archipelagos in Oceania that were annexed by France in the mid 1800s. The approximate current population is >270,000, with 70% of the population concentrated on the island of Tahiti. Its capitol, Papeete, is on Tahiti. Currently, French Polynesians have full suffrage and can vote in French elections. The government of French Polynesia consists of a unicameral legislature with a President picked from among that body. The duties of the President and legislature are modeled after that of the French government. The official head of state is the French President, represented by a high

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<sup>11</sup> "Non-Self-Governing Territories." United Nations, United Nations, <http://www.un.org/en/decolonization/nonselfgovterritories.shtml>

<sup>12</sup> Special Political and Decolonization

<sup>13</sup> "Fangataufa and Moruroa." Nuclear Risks, [www.nuclear-risks.org/en/hibakusha-worldwide/fangataufa-and-moruroa.html](http://www.nuclear-risks.org/en/hibakusha-worldwide/fangataufa-and-moruroa.html).

commissioner. The French Polynesian government is not enabled to make decisions relating to defense, diplomacy, and justice.<sup>14</sup>



Figure 1 – Map of Oceania with French Polynesia highlighted

In 2013, French Polynesia was added to the U.N.'s list of non-self-governing territories. It had previously been on the list from 1946 to 1947. Under pressure from various indigenous peoples' groups, French Polynesia was reclassified as a non-self-governing territory. This status would allow it to undergo a U.N.-backed independence referendum.<sup>15</sup>

Complicating this is that most French Polynesians support staying a part of the French Republic. Though a pro-independence President led the country multiple times between 2004-2013, pro-independence parties have never won a majority. Further, French Polynesia is well-integrated into its regional politics (it is a member-state of the Pacific Islands Forum), which demonstrates a degree of self-autonomy. France additionally believes that French Polynesia should not be considered a non-self-governing territory.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> "French Polynesia." Encyclopædia Britannica, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 11 July 2017, [www.britannica.com/place/French-Polynesia](http://www.britannica.com/place/French-Polynesia).

<sup>15</sup> "Non-self-governing territories"

<sup>16</sup> "Statement by Mr. Manuel Tirai (French Polynesia)." [www.un.org/en/decolonization/pdf/French-Polynesia2017.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/decolonization/pdf/French-Polynesia2017.pdf).

## Nuclear Testing in French Polynesia

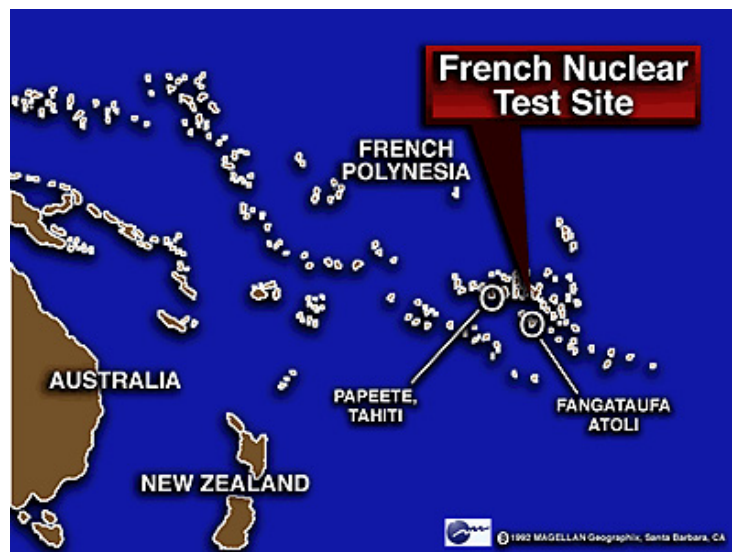


Figure 2 – Map showing nuclear test site at Fangataufa Atoll

From 1966 to 1996, France tested nuclear weapons in French Polynesia, creating long lasting damage. These tests occurred on the neighboring Moruroa and Fagataufa Atolls, located about 780 miles from Papeete, Tahiti.

Nuclear testing was briefly halted in 1992 though it resumed in 1995. Due to public outcry, France stopped nuclear testing the following year in 1996. Over thirty years, France tested approximately 181 times in French Polynesia. Forty-one of these tests were atmospheric.<sup>17</sup>

Initially, France detonated bombs at a low altitude, such as from boats, but this allowed the radiation to spread too far. They moved to detonating from bombs attached to helium balloons and eventually to underground testing. During their period of highest testing (between 1966 and 1975), increased radiation levels were detected in neighboring countries, extending as far as Mexico to the east.

Many people were affected during this period of testing because of proximity to testing locations and because of accidents. For example, in 1979, part of the Moruroa Atoll collapsed, creating a radioactive tsunami. In 1978, people living on the islands closest to the nuclear test sites were evacuated because of the high radiation levels. Other events that exposed people to radiation occurred throughout this time. Much of the data from this period has been kept classified, though.

Recently discovered damage in the atoll indicates that further collapses could occur with very little warning, releasing further radioactivity into the ocean. Currently, there is already substantial amounts of radioactive waste present around the atolls that has impacted plant and animal life.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> “French Polynesia”

<sup>18</sup> “Fangataufa and Moruroa”

Currently, the French government acknowledges the damage it has caused and pays reparations to French Polynesia.<sup>19</sup>

### **Questions to consider**

How can SPEC POL best facilitate the decolonization of territories?

What form should reparations for nuclear testing take? And how should the size and nature of these reparations be determined?

Should radiation exposure caused by accidents be dealt with differently than that caused by intentional testing? If so, how should they be dealt with?

When should a territory be taken off the list of non-self-governing territories?

### **Bloc Positions**

The USA, the UK, France, and New Zealand all administer colonial territories. These countries would like a way to maintain their holdings, though also likely have these territories removed from the list of non-self-governing territories.

Argentina and Morocco are currently in disputes over the administration of colonial territories which they believe to be theirs.

The other member states have less of a stake in the problem. Based on geographic proximity, they benefit most from long term, peaceful solutions to these problems.

The EU believes in compensation for nuclear testing victims, though within fiscal bounds.

Russia believes that compensation should be dealt with by impacted countries and not the international community.

Most other member states strongly believe in compensation, especially those impacted by nuclear testing.

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<sup>19</sup> Statement by Mr. Manuel Tirai

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