

**Forum:** Special Political & Decolonization Committee (GA 3)

**Issue:** Discussing the right to self-determination of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories

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## Introduction

When the UN was founded in 1945, some 750 million people, nearly a third of the world's population, lived in "territories" dependent on colonial powers. The impact that this has had on the framework of the UN can be seen through the responsibility of one of its main bodies, The Special Committee on Decolonization(C-24). The C-24's ultimate goal is to examine the application of the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples.

Therefore, the idea that the UN only represents the 193 self-governed states it officially recognizes would still be very ignorant and incorrect. It is often overlooked that the UN also represents the center of this report, the non-self-governed territories. Even though there may only be 17 self-governing territories and less than 2 million people living in these provinces today, they still must be assisted in slowly cutting off the strings that their colonizers have tied them to.

That is more often easier said than done though because most of these NSGTs are also considered as Small Island Developing States. These present them with a peculiar and challenging set of obstacles that they have to overcome before they are ready to sustain themselves. Some of these difficulties link to their remote geography which results in high import and export costs for goods as well as irregular international traffic volumes even though for most goods they still have to, resulting from their limited resources. Factors such as very low population, transportation costs, and easily threatened land and marine ecosystems make SIDS particularly vulnerable to climate change since they do not possess economic alternatives.



## Definition of Key Terms

**Colonialism:** occupying a country with settlers often to gain political power to exploit it economically

**Non-Self-Governing Territories:** territories whose people have not yet attained a full measure of self-government

**Self-Determination:** the process by which a country creates its government and decides its statehood

**Referendum:** a general vote held by the government of a nation in which all voters vote on a single political decision that has been referred to them such as self-governance

**Administering Power:** the countries that govern non-self-governing territories

**Small Island Developing States:** a group of island states/regions determined by the United Nations that face extraordinary social, economic, and environmental vulnerabilities



## Background Information

Before the political situation of current non-self-governing territories can be understood, it is crucial to comprehend how this type of governing has come to be and why these territories, often thousands of kilometers away from their administering powers have yet to attain full self-governance. Throughout the attempt to answer this question, one term responsible for the economic activities, international relations, and borders of copious nations inevitably comes into play: colonialism.

Colonialism, which had most of the world under its influence from the “Age of European Discovery” in the 15th century until the mid-20th century, can be defined as ‘the practice of acquiring full or partial political influence over another country and occupying it with settlers often with the goal of economic exploitation’. While this practice enabled colonizers to access copious amounts of economic resources, advance technologically, spread their religion and way of living, and gain immense amounts of new land, it was its insane harm to the colonized that led to its inevitable demise.



A map of all lands that were at one point colonies of the British Empire



Colonies were very often oppressed harshly, suppressed culturally, and exploited for economic purposes, leading to death, diseases, and ultimately, detestation of their colonizers. This hatred grew only larger with time passing, however, only a few could declare their independence early on such as the United States of America in 1776 and some South American countries in the 19th century. Only when the United Nations was established in 1945 after the end of World War 2, were these colonies able to express their issues in an international forum, leading to most of these territories eventually declaring their independence.

Even so, this in itself was a long and harsh process, considering that for centuries they were under the control of an outside power, influencing their every decision. The instantaneous abolishment of this power would lead to turmoil in most areas, so to ensure a smooth transition to independence, in 1946 the UN established the Trusteeship Council with its five permanent members being some of the most prominent colonialists; China, France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States. With the assistance of this council, these 72 so-called non-self-governing or in some cases "Trust Territories" gradually gained the means necessary to be able to sustain their independence, and after the 1961 "Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples", a majority of these former colonies declared their total independence. Although some former colonies later faced some issues such as the lingering effects of French nuclear testing in Algeria, they and their citizens had access to the same rights as their former colonizers.

Although most opted for forming an independent country, some preferred to remain under the rule of their former colonizer, remaining as non-self-governing territories. There was however one critical difference: these territories' rights were protected by the UN organs and resolutions, and thus the days of exploitation were largely over. Later on, most of the provinces opting to stay under partial foreign control also decided to declare independence, and in 1994, one month after the last remaining UN Trust Territory, Palau, declared its independence, The Trusteeship Council suspended its operations.



For the remaining non-self-governing territories, there were four options laid out by the United Nations: independence, free association, integration with another state, or another option freely determined by the people. The applications of these options do not run as smoothly as they are laid out to be though, as can be seen by some disputes in past years. Exemplary arguments took place between the Decolonization Committee and the administering power during the decision of if pre-independence Brunei and the West Indies Associated States should remain "non-self-governing". The Decolonization Committee reasoned that the administering country had been prepared to grant full independence whenever the territory requested it. These bickerings however came to an end when those territories eventually received full autonomy.

That does not necessarily mean that there aren't any ongoing tensions though, as there currently remain 5 administering powers and 17 non-self-governing territories officially recognized by the United Nations. For each of these, there are advocates for the continuation of territorial status. Others want their province to become a full member of the occupying nation. Still, others demand full sovereignty. Thus, it is best if we take a closer look at their individual situations.



**The 17 current non-self-governing territories and their administrative powers**



## Non-Self-Governing Territories of the United Kingdom:



A British Overseas Territory comprised of several islets and a larger island, Anguilla is a non-self-governing territory in the Caribbean with a population of approximately 15,000. While human occupation dates back to around 1000 BC, it is widely accepted that Christopher Columbus was the one who put the islands on European maps in the 15th century. British influence on the island dates back to 1650 when the first colonizers arrived from Saint Kitts, making Anguilla a part of the Leeward Islands Colony.

Used throughout the 18th century as a sugar plantation worked by African slaves, during this period a major discontent on the island was the fact that it was administered from Saint Kitts, rather than directly from Britain. This gained traction after the abolishment of slavery on the island in 1834, however, their petition to be directly administered from Britain was rejected. In 1956, after the disbanding of the Leeward Islands Federation, Anguilla, together with Saint Kitts and Nevis, became a crown colony of the British government.

After a series of failed attempts to form a larger federation, in 1967 Anguilla, Saint Kitts, and Nevis became an associated state. However Anguilla's issues from the past reemerged and the Saint Kitts police were forced off the island, proclaiming an independent republic and government. British rule was restored the next year, but it was in 1971 that the Anguilla Act placed the island under full British control. Anguilla became a dependent territory in 1980 and 2002 an overseas territory.

Several referendums have been held on the island, even after it became an overseas territory, however, the results have been majorly in favor of remaining under British rule. The UK currently holds responsibility for Anguilla's defense, foreign affairs, and partially governmental decisions. Financial aid from Britain is also crucial for the Anguillan economy since it is majorly based on tourism, although this is not very sustainable.



## Bermuda



First appearing on a Spanish map in 1511 and its discovery being attributed to Juan Bermudez, Bermuda is a British territory with a parliamentary government. The Virginia Company established the first British interaction with Bermuda in 1609, bringing 150 shipwrecked travelers. Although they left the island in the upcoming year, this event led to the first British settlements on the islands. Until the abolishment of slavery, Bermuda welcomed slaves or workers from Africa, Asia, and even prisoners from Scotland and Ireland.

A non-self-governing territory since 1946, according to its 1968 constitution the islands are under the head of state, the British monarch, however, decisions are followed through with the approval of the cabinet. Still, defense, the police, and external affairs are largely controlled by the British. The islands' past has not been without political tension though, especially rising in 1973 with the assassination of the British governor to the islands, Sir Richard Sharples. Starting a chain of riots leading to sovereignty talks in 1977, this process however ended when an August 1995 referendum revealed that close to three-fourths of Bermuda's population opposed total independence. Nowadays, the political situation is not very heated and the islands mainly attract tourists as an economic activity. A neo-gothic church is a popular visit for these tourists, showing the Christian influence on the islands.

## British Virgin Islands



The British Virgin Islands, like most of the Caribbean, was first explored by Christopher Columbus. There were however the original settlers, the Caribs, when he arrived. While they were early on left alone, in 1555 Emperor Charles V tasked a Spanish force with claiming the islands in his name, killing or exiling most of the



Caribs. After that, the islands quickly became a pirate hideout. The biggest of the islands, Tortola was originally Dutch-occupied, however, in 1666 English planters took over the islands. Six years later, it became a part of the Leeward Islands. Although these planters had their own government, with the abolishment of slavery, the islands lost their major self-governance. Only in 1950 was a Legislative Council re-established.

After dealing with issues such as drug trade, riots, and economic turmoils, there is ongoing political unrest in the British Virgin Islands. As mentioned throughout the 2023 Pacific Regional Seminar, the UK's Minister for Overseas Territories stated that "she visited the British Virgin Islands on 2 and 3 May, adding that the political discussion was frank, open, and constructive. Expressing grave concern about governance issues, she said the sentiment against direct rule is not only strong in the British Virgin Islands but also across the Caribbean, where Governments and people genuinely want to see the United Kingdom break with its past and stand up as a champion of freedom and democracy." Even though these comments were made by an official, a decision has not yet been reached regarding the British Virgin Islands' fate regarding self-determination.

### Cayman Islands



The Cayman Islands, originally called Las Tortugas inspired by the native turtle population, were with the 1670 Treaty of Madrid ceded to Great Britain, which marked the first permanent settlements on the island. Most inhabitants were British pioneers, shipwrecked passengers, planters, and their African slaves. In the 1700s, with the virtual elimination of the turtle population resulting from overfishing, it took away the Cayman Islands' most prominent financial resource. For some time, the islands were a part of Jamaica, however following Jamaica's 1962 autonomy declaration, they transferred to direct British reign.





By 1972, most of the domestic issues were led autonomously, and from offshore banking and tourism gains, British aid was not essential for the continuation of the islands' sustainability. The constitution was modernized in 2009, outlawing many kinds of discrimination and solidifying the implementation of human rights. Furthermore, after its amendment in 2020, it provided for internal autonomy under a governor, a cabinet, and a Parliament. 2004 was an especially devastating year for the Cayman Islands because they were in the direct path of Hurricane Ivan which caused over 25 billion US dollars in damage and claimed 128 lives.

### Falkland Islands(Malvinas)



Lying off the coast of South America, the Falkland Islands, also commonly called Islas Malvinas, are two adjacent islands that while being internally self-governing British dependencies, are quite often claimed by Argentina. Excluding the British military officers employed at the Royal Air Force base on the islands, the 2560 permanent residents are almost exclusively of British descent.

The first proven discovery of the islands was made in 1600 by a Dutch sailor, but it was 90 years later that the first recorded landing was made by Captain John Strong, also giving the islands the name Falkland in honor of a British naval officer. The first settlements were founded on East Falkland in 1764 by a French navigator, calling the islands Malovines. West Falkland was settled the following year by the English, but only 5 years later they were driven away by the Spanish who had previously taken over the French-occupied island. The Spanish settlement remained until 1811, and when the Buenos Aires government gained its autonomy 5 years later, they didn't take long to proclaim their ownership of the Falklands. 1831 marked the destruction of the Argentine settlement by a US warship after they had



restrained some American fishermen hunting sails. 2 years later, all Argentinians had left.

Even though by 1885 a self-supporting British community had been erected on the islands, Argentina did not back down from their claim. The topic especially escalated after the Second World War, when the issue was carried to the UN, the Special Committee on Decolonization debating the issue in 1964. While UN-led peace talks commenced from this point forward, this did not stop Argentina from commencing a military invasion in 1982. The forces surrendered 10 weeks later at the capital Stanley, but the issue still had not concluded. While still keeping 2000 troops on the Falklands, the UK still attempted to improve the situation of the Falklanders, implementing a new constitution in 2009, and strengthening the local government. A 2013 referendum was a clear implication that the Falklanders were almost fully content with remaining as a British overseas territory.



Although previously being called home by a group of Caribs, Montserrat was uninhabited by the time Columbus and his crew set foot on the island. The first British governor to Saint Kitts, sent Irish Catholics to the island in 1632, intending to make it a British colony. A part of the Leeward Islands Federal Colony, after its abolishment Montserrat became an individual colony of the British. There was however one thing that differentiated it from its fellow island colonies of Britain in the West Indies: it did not have any intention to take steps towards sovereignty, not seeking associated statehood. This idea was not only upheld by merchants and others who benefited economically from being under British rule, in the 1990's this relation became very crucial.



First, in 1989, the island was hit by Hurricane Hugo, and the British greatly assisted in rebuilding the capital at the time, Plymouth. Sadly, in 1995 volcanic activity on the island resumed after centuries of inertia, and in 1997 a discharge of lava not only killed 19 people but also deemed two-thirds of the island, including Plymouth, uninhabitable. Causing chaos between the citizens and the government, the island not only lost a large part of its main economic gain from tourism but also had a shortage of food as the agricultural sector came to a halt. The same year it was decided that the most active part of the island should be abandoned and Montserrat became almost entirely dependent on British backing to rebuild and hold itself up. These events have had such a big impact on Montserrat that the largest economic activity in the 21st century was mostly construction.

Saint Helena



Being so remote that it was seen as a worthy exile location for Napoleon until his death in 1821, which is also its main point of tourist attraction, the volcanic island of Saint Helena lies in the middle of the South Atlantic Ocean and houses 4500 souls. Not having much of an industry and only one town, Jamestown, which is also the capital, Saint Helena except tourism and British aid sustains itself partially from coffee production, tuna fishing, and cattle. Being entirely uninhabited until the 16th century, Saint Helena has a very unique fauna, being the only place where black cabbage trees grow.

First being discovered by the Portuguese in 1502 and rediscovered by British Captain Thomas Cavendish on his world tour. Saint Helena was a part of the English East India Company, receiving a reasonable number of slaves from Africa until 1834. The island came under the full authority of the English following that and remained reasonably active as a trade port until the opening of the Suez Canal in 1870 when it



greatly lost business. In 1966, the island received partial self-control, being provided with local executive and legislative councils. Receiving a new constitution in 1989, the latest significant political development was in 2009 when a renewal of the constitution further limited the control of the British governor and transferred this authority to the elected council.

### Turks and Caicos Islands



An overseas territory of the United Kingdom in the West Indies, Turks and Caicos consists of islands, keys, islets, reefs, and banks. Although they are all part of the territory, most of them are uninhabited with four-fifths of the population of 46000 living on just three islands: Grand Turk, where the capital Cockburn Town is located, Providenciales, and West Caicos. Circa 90% of the population is of African descent and most identify as Christian.

According to the reconstructed diary of Columbus, when he reached the islands, most of them were inhabited by the local Taino folk. Quickly dying off of European diseases, the islands were largely repopulated only when Americans opposing the American Revolution arrived in the 1780s, bringing with them slaves and establishing cotton plantations. Only two decades later, the Bahamas annexed the islands, controlling them until they were given a separate charter in 1848. The slave owners gradually left, leaving their slaves behind. After that, the English took over control and in 1962 the Turks and Caicos became a crown colony. Even though the territory was preparing to gain independence by 1982, the 1980 elections saw a pro-British government being elected, and the sovereignty plans were scrapped. In 2002, all Turks and Caicos residents were granted full UK citizenship. There were however some issues with the government, seeing the resignation of the prime minister in 2009 after investigations revealed the presence of systematic corruption. This led to the suspension of the constitution and a period of political reform. A



newly drafted resolution took effect in 2012, seemingly having taken measures against the recently revealed scandal.

Compared to the other British NSGTs, the Turks and Caicos are economically quite well-off. Although in the 1970's there was a big migration to the Bahamas and the United States in search of job opportunities, many of them eventually returned. During the same period, Turks and Caicos underwent a large economic boom, with the GDP increasing around 8 percent each year. This was majorly attributable to offshore financial services, as the island received outside investment since the government does not collect any income or company tax. This led to more than 10.000 international businesses being headquartered on the islands in the 21st century.

## Gibraltar



While it is only 5 kilometers long and 1 kilometer wide, the narrow peninsula on Spain's Mediterranean coast, Gibraltar, has great strategic importance since it guards the sole entrance from the Atlantic Ocean to the Mediterranean Sea. Evidence of prehistoric settlements in the area has been found as a result of limestone excavations. Used as a fortress since the capture of the area by Tariq ibn Zayid, who also gave his name to the area, the Muslim control was passed to Spain in 1462, fully joining Spain in 1501.

British dominance over the area came 200 years later when Sir George Rooke won over the area during the War of Spanish Succession. Although a treaty was signed, Spain did not cease its claims over the area, sieging it unsuccessfully from 1779 to 1783. The crown colony gained even more importance with the opening of the Suez Canal and motivated the British to keep it under their administration. An important assembly point during the era of the World Wars, the Spanish government



reiterated its determination to reclaim the area in the 1960s. The push for decolonization by the Spanish led to a referendum in 1967, the options being Spanish sovereignty or British rule. Of the 12.000 voters, only 44 were pro-Spanish, which should have signified the territory's content under British administration, however, the Spanish have not given up. In 1969 the area gained major self-governance and the Spaniards responded by closing their borders to Gibraltar until 1985, thus cutting off a major trade partnership. In 2009, a meeting between the three sides saw the first time a Spanish minister came to the territory since its transfer to British rule. A fisher's rights quarrel in 2013 led Spain to tighten border security, which the UK contested with the reasoning that it was opposing the European Union laws. Although Spanish politicians expressed the desire for a peaceful solution, the territory continued to be a non-self-governing territory under the governance of the British.

Preserving its naval significance for the British for more than three centuries, Gibraltar self-governs everything except its defense. Resurrected by the Gibraltar Constitution Order in 1969, their constitution gives Gibraltar the right for a House of Assembly, renamed the Gibraltar Parliament in 2007, and 17 elected representatives. Since 1981 all Gibraltarians, who make up 80% of the population, are automatic British citizens, and all over the age of 18 can vote. The British-appointed governor is responsible for appointing ministers from the party that has gained the majority in the most recent elections.

Pitcairn



By far the least populated non-self-governing territory on the globe, Pitcairn lies virtually isolated in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. While several historical artifacts show the presence of a former Polynesian settlement, the rediscovery of Pitcairn was only in 1767 by the British ship HMS Swallow. Receiving its first British



settlers thanks to an uprising on a cargo ship in 1790, which saw the captain and some loyal sailors finding refuge on the island after drifting on the Pacific Ocean, they were found by whalers in 1808. Although they were supplied occasionally by the British, the lack of natural resources pushed them to emigrate to Tahiti. Ironically, most returned to Pitcairn, deciding that Tahiti was not right for them. First becoming a settlement under the British high commissioner for the western Pacific, Fiji later received the governance. After 1970, New Zealand was determined responsible for appointing a governor to the island, aided by a local council.

Although the island is a close-knit community, considering that there are only circa 60 people on the island and rely on their resources, a controversial case took place on the island in 1999. An investigation revealed that there were several cases of child sexual abuse and eight men total were charged for over 50 counts of offenses. 2010 saw the most recent governmental change on the island, which with a new constitution saw the appointment of an attorney general to the island by the governor.

## Non-Self-Governing Territories of the United States of America:

United States Virgin Islands



Not to be confused with the British Virgin Islands, the US Virgin Islands are the closest neighbors of their British counterparts. The Virgin Islands, both the British and USA islands, were inhabited from 1000 BC onward, by South American explorers. Slowly founding a new society which came to be known as the Taino, they ruled over the islands until the 15th century when the Caribs invaded. When Columbus arrived, he decided to name the Islands Santa Ursula y las Once Mil Vírgenes, which eventually turned into just the Virgin Islands. A Spanish expedition



gained control over the area in 1555, but the French and British were more present on the island of St. Croix by 1625. A series of ownership changes saw the island eventually in the hands of the French. Tortola, another important island, was under Dutch buccaneers until 1666 when the English settled, and the same year St. Thomas was claimed by the Danish. Denmark established sugarcane plantations and transported African slaves to the island. Eventually becoming the center of the slave trade in the Caribbean, Denmark also acquired St. Croix in 1733 and increased sugarcane production. After multiple slave revolts, eventually, this industry was disrupted in the 19th century and Denmark lost major interest in the area.

Negotiations by the USA commencing in 1860 saw the islands being bought in 1917 for 25 million dollars, and the islands were under the control of the US Navy until 1931. Later, civilian governors were appointed to take over the job. The first elected governor took office in 1970 and the right to draft a constitution was granted in 1976. Somehow, none of the four constitutions drafted until 2007 were accepted by the USA as feasible, and the commencement of a fifth convention saw a draft submitted to Barack Obama by 2009. Given back with recommended alterations the following year, the convention has been gathering to discuss the potential changes to the constitution since 2012, with the Organic Act of the Virgin Islands remaining as the governing document.

Upheld by tourism especially coming from mainland USA, the islands previously were very well known for their petroleum refineries, perhaps an effect of American governance, however, the plant closed down in 2012. Three-fourths of the US Virgin Islands is of black descent and most of the population is Christian. The government, according to the Organic Act of the Virgin Islands, is comprised of executive, legislative, and judicial branches. The governor is not appointed by the US government, instead being elected by the islanders, but the islanders do not have the right to vote in USA elections.





## American Samoa



Borrowing its name from its close neighbor and ethnically majority group, American Samoa is composed of six Samoan islands all part of Polynesia and its capital is Pago Pago on its largest island Tutulia. Since American Samoa is a not fully organized province of the USA, not the entirety of the U.S. Constitution is followed through on the six islands. American Samoa has not received a charter, being given the right to create its constitution in 1967. Although not citizens, American Samoans can reside in the United States of America. The territory has a bicameral legislature called the Fono, which means that there are two separate houses or assemblies which also vote separately. Although the governor has the right to not go through with it, the Fono decides the partition of local revenues on its own. From 1981 onwards, American Samoa has had a non-voting representative in the US House of Representatives. Although there is a set governmental system, the importance of family chiefs still exists, heading village councils responsible for running local relations.

Just like all the other current non-self-governing territories, the islands of American Samoa were first settled by Polynesians 500 years before Christ. Jacob Roggeveen, a Dutchman was the first to discover the island for Europeans in 1722, and others soon followed. In the early 19th century multiple missionaries went to the area, influencing the local population. The United States first established a naval station in Pago Pago Harbor in 1878, and in 1899, the Samoas, which American Samoa is a part of, the USA gained influence over the eastern islands. Although locals had little say over decisions, the US Navy turned the area into a naval base until 1951 when control was shifted to the Department of Interior. Although the USA appointed governors to the area at first, Samoans expressed their disagreement and Peter Coleman became the first elected governor of American Samoa in 1977. Mostly leading a peaceful internal and external policy, American Samoa was very



badly affected by the 8.3 magnitude earthquake in 2009 that was followed by a tsunami that flooded most of the islands killing 189 people and causing significant damage to infrastructure.

Guam



Populated by Guamanians of Malayo-Indonesian descent together with Spanish, Filipino, and Mexicans, Guam is an important base of the American military located in the Mariana Islands group. The importance of the local military base during the Second World War brought with it the importing of most of the agricultural necessities, drastically reducing local produce. All Guamanians are non-voting US citizens who nevertheless have party representatives according to the Organic Act of Guam which also is the governing document of the territory. A unicameral body, not to be confused with a bicameral body, legislates Guam with 15 senators elected biannually. Opting for a commonwealth affiliation with the USA in 1982, Guamonians at present have no serious issue remaining a territory of the United States.

All Mariana Islands were first settled by Indo-Filipinos around 1500 BCE. The islands have archeological remains dating back to 800 CE which show signs of a complex society already being present. Officially claimed by Europeans first in 1565, Spain however did not opt to fully overthrow the existing leaders until an insurrection in 1675, when they at last fully conquered the islands with a lot of bloodshed. Staying under the Spanish until 1898, the Spanish-American War saw a US warship overthrowing the existing Spanish stronghold. Guam was shortly under Japanese governing during WW2, however otherwise they had an American naval officer governing them until 1950. The period in which the Japanese occupied Gua was



from right after the Pearl Harbor incident until 1944. After being reconquered, Guam proved to be a crucial base for the military during the end of the war. The naval bases are so extensive on the island that one-third is under US Army control. After the referendum which favored remaining an American territory, a Commonwealth Act went into effect in 1987, and in 2000 the military base became the first overseas US territory with air-launched missiles. A plan to transfer 5000 Marines from the US military base in Okinawa, Japan commenced in 2015 and is projected to be accomplished by latest 2030.

### **Non-Self-Governing Territories of the French Republic:**

**French Polynesia**



A settlement of archipelagos, French Polynesia is composed of five of them, one being the Marquesas islands. The Marquesas are the oldest settled out of them, dating back to around 200 BC. On another one of them, the Society Islands, a center of religion named Marae Taputapuātea was established. Currently a UN World Heritage Site, the center prompted the sprouting of settlements on other islands. Ferdinand Magellan, being the one who discovered the archipelagos from a European perspective in 1520 lead to seamen visiting them. Exemplary are the visit of British voyager Samuel Wallis and French explorer Louis Antoine de Bougainville's expeditions to Tahiti in 1767 and 1768 respectively. Being unified by King Pomare in 1788, the islands took on the name Kingdom of Tahiti, and in 1797 with the influence of missionaries most converted to Christianity. However, things took a turn when King Pomare IV contested the presence of missionaries on Tahiti, and the French-Tahitian War of 1840 ensued. Annexing the islands at first, British



pressure stopped them from going any further than declaring it a protectorate.

1880 saw the transfer of leadership of Tahiti into the hands of the French by King Pomare V, and it officially became a colony. France was pressured into granting French nationality to the indigenous by a Tahitian nationalist group in 1940, and in 1946 it was declared an overseas territory. Altering its name to French Polynesia in 1957, a constitution approval saw a referendum result of 64% choosing to remain under the French regiment the year after. The territory was granted partial internal autonomy and extended autonomy seven years later in 1984. Changed to an overseas collectivity, in 2003, French Polynesia is often called an overseas country due to its level of self-governance. At the request of the local government, French Polynesia was readmitted to the list of NSGTs in 2013 after being taken out in 1947.

A decision whose consequences would prove to be quite controversial in the future was taken by France in 1962, and nuclear tests began taking place on uninhabited islands that are part of French Polynesia. Reports in the 21st century implied that many of the health issues on the islands were caused by these tests although they were cut off in 1996, and in 2009 France offered 10 million dollars in reconciliation which was promptly declined. The situation got even worse when there were serious accusations of France masking the true nature and results of the tests. France has however declined requests for environmental reconciliation in the area affected.

## New Caledonia



Named a UNESCO World Heritage site for the coral reefs it is surrounded by, the non-self-governing territory of New Caledonia is made up of the island of New Caledonia with 90% of the population, and three island clusters. First settled by



Melanesians 5000 years ago, the islands only established significant outside contact when the British cartographer James Cook visited the area in 1774. Inspired, French Antoine de Bruni set sail for the islands in 1793. Around 1841 French Christian missions converted most locals to Christianity, and French influence continued to increase until they took possession of New Caledonia in 1853, planning on converting it to a penal colony, a colony mostly used to exile prisoners to.

The previous owners were however not content with the new leadership and frequent uprisings were common among the Melanesians until 1917, especially in the 1850s and 1870s. The French responded by demolishing villages and destroying crops, sometimes executing the provocateurs. During this period, perhaps to weaken the uprising France created reserves where most Melanesians were forced to live, and altered the lands of the indigenous drastically. Tough administration was not limited to only that though, with involuntary labor and harsh rules to leave the islands imposed on the indigenous. This system was called the indigénat. While all of this was happening, the French also sent around 22.000 criminals to the island, accomplishing their original intentions of gaining control of the province. Although many waves of free settlers also came to the islands, from politicians exiled for the 1871 Paris Commune uprising to sugar planters from Reunion, very few of them stayed or established families. Although the French systematically worked to increase the European population, they remained the minority. This would change in the 1970s when the discovery of extensive nickel ore deposits on the islands attracted new European settlers, making the Europeans the majority group for the first time.

1953 marked the year when all New Caledonians were granted French citizenship, and a major step towards self-governing was taken with the joint efforts of Europeans and Melanesians bringing to power the Union Caledonienne which created a system of full self-governance in internal issues. 4 years later, the



Territorial Assembly was established, electing an executive to serve as a representative under a high commissioner. In the 1970s, the Union Caledonienne became increasingly more Melanese dominated and in 1979 transformed into the Independence Front. While the French proposed granting full self-government to New Caledonia in 1984, the Independence Front did not accept, showing adamancy in their desire for autonomy, even boycotting the elections that year. Political clashes shaped the next decade with the party previously known as the Independence Front battling pro-French opposition.

In 1998 the French Republic and the two opposing sides signed the Matignon Accords which altered the status of New Caledonia from overseas territory to unique collectivity and promised several referendums to be held in 15 to 20 years. The first two referendums were held in 2018 and 2020, with independence being rejected by 56 and 53 percent respectively. The third referendum was quite controversial as just before the referendum a surge in Covid-19 saw the pro-independence Kanak population being disproportionately affected, and their request for the delay of the referendum was denied. Thus, the Kanaks majorly refused voting in the final referendum and with a voter turnout of only 44 percent, independence was rejected by 96 percent. When examining why the indigenous people are keen on independence it is obvious that it is related to their quality of life. While the average GDP per capita of New Caledonia is quite high, Europeans earn four times that of Melanesian households. Furthermore, two-thirds of the land is in the hands of Europeans who are not very involved with farming or animal raising, greatly limiting the agricultural opportunities of the indigenous.



## Non-Self-Governing Territories of New Zealand:

Tokelau



Made up of three atolls in the South Pacific, Tokelau is not centrally governed and doesn't have a capital, instead, there are representatives from all three atolls. Culturally very close to Samoa, most of the population is of Polynesian descent. Tokelau is pretty much a self-sustaining territory, with very little trade, and most people are occupied with pig farming or coconut growing. A recent development with the help of the New Zealand government was the installation of solar panels on the atolls, enabling them to thus provide almost all of their energy requirements themselves.

Administered by New Zealand under the Tokelau Islands Act of 1948, all Tokelauans are also citizens of New Zealand. Most of the authority is under the Tokelau Council which consists of elected leaders for all three atolls. The budget, a part of the rule-making, and governmental recommendations are made by General Fono, which is the assembly representing the entire province. The atolls are locally governed by a Council of Elders, who are family heads and village mayors.

Based on the language spoken, it is likely that Tokelau was first settled by Samoans. The first European attention to Tokelau was John Byron in 1765 who discovered one of the atolls. Several other expeditions for varied reasons took place and another atoll was discovered over the next few decades. A planned expedition was conducted by the United States in 1841 which thoroughly examined the locals of the two known atolls. Samoan missionaries supported by the French converted the locals to Christianity, and this worked out very well for the missionaries with most residents being very religious to this day. Slave traders abducted a part of the population of Tokelau in 1863 and adding the impact of some new diseases, the population dropped to as low as 200. In 1877, the British high commissioner of Fiji



received monitoring of the islands, and the atolls were put under a few administrations by the British government until eventually New Zealand was granted jurisdiction in 1952. Although the atolls were always considered together, the name Tokelau only came forward in 1976. New Zealand is responsible for most of the administration, but there is some level of self-governing. There has however not been any discontent, with Tokelau not showing any interest in independence and New Zealand declaring nothing would be decided without the agreement of the atolls.

### Non-Self-Governing Territories in Africa:

Western Sahara(Disputed)



The area of Western Sahara on the Atlantic Coast of West Africa which majorly desertified circa 4500 years ago, is currently home to a heated argument regarding the right to govern the area and its circa 700.000 population. During the 4th century, the area already had some connections with Europe and the Romans also visited the area from time to time. With the turn of the millennium, the Berber people who were the natives at the time were controlled by Muslim Bedouins, and European contact was cut off at that point. Although during the 15th century, a Spaniard established a trade location, the Europeans were not very knowledgeable regarding the area until the 19th century when Spanish merchants came to the Western Sahara. In 1884 Emilio Bonelli, in the name of Spain signed treaties with the population living in the bay area Rio de Oro, and a Spanish protectorate was established.





In 1957, a newly independent Morocco declared their claim upon the area showing their historical occupation of the area as reasoning. Repelling the Moroccans, in 1958 a territory encompassing the Rio de Oro was established under the name Spanish Sahara. Morocco was not alone though, with Mauritania putting their claim on the area two years later and the issue became even more complex when valuable phosphate mines were discovered in the area. All of these events eventually resulted in the indigenous people in the area rebelling against the colonialistic ideology and the Sahrawis in the area commenced a guerilla uprising in the 70s. The group of rebels that called themselves the Polisario Front pushed Spain to decide its withdrawal from the territory in 1975, however, the Sahrawi were disappointed to find out that Spain decided to divide the administration of the area between Morocco and Mauritania.

Even though this went against an international court ruling which declared the local Sahrawi's right to self-determination as reasonable, two-thirds, including the phosphate came under Moroccan control and the other third was declared Mauritania's. Sparking fights between the Polisario Front and Moroccan authority, a government-in-exile (a government which is temporarily not located in the area they claim ownership of) was established, the Sahrawi Arab Republic. Although Mauritania backed out in 1979, Morocco took over that portion of the area too, and continued their battle with the Polisario. In 1988, a UN peace proposal with a referendum for self-determination was agreed upon and a cease-fire was struck in 1991. As the UN sent a peacekeeping force to ensure a rightful referendum, Morocco moved tens of thousands of people to Western Sahara, claiming they had the right to vote in the referendum. Following unrest from similar events, by 2001, many thousands of Sahrawi locals and Polisario fighters relocated to Algeria, who had been a supporter from early on. The referendum idea was outright rejected in 2001 by Morocco, and new UN recommendations such as a five-year autonomy period before reaching a decision were not found viable. A definitive solution could not be reached and in 2020 the Polisario Front blockaded a crucial trade road between



Mauritania and Morocco, their two old antagonists, which led to the abolishment of the 1991 peace agreement. Currently, 70 countries recognize the Sahrawi Arab Republic while only the USA and Israel recognize Morocco's claim over the territory.

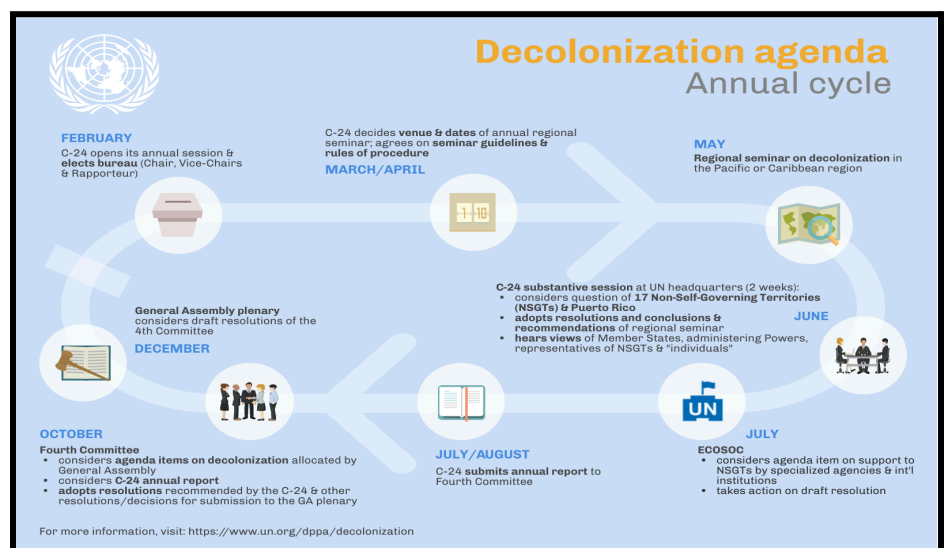
Putting the political issues aside, Western Sahara also currently has serious social issues. For one, freedom of speech is very limited in the area with a previous human rights minister being imprisoned on 11 counts of which at least 6 were found to infringe his freedom of speech by Amnesty International. Many journalists are also behind bars for reasons that, according to Human Rights Watch, are used as tactics by Moroccan officials to suppress criticism. Furthermore, women's rights are also controversial with girls as young as 15 being able to marry at the request of their families and marital rape not being criminalized. Children's guardians are also always their father after divorce, even if their mother has a court order.

## Major Countries and Organizations Involved

**Administering Powers:** For obvious reasons, the administering powers, namely the USA, UK, France, and New Zealand are the most involved of any countries and organizations regarding the agenda of non-self-governing territories. Nevertheless, several other countries and organizations are essential for the sustainable development and just treatment of non-self-governing territories.

### The United Nations:

Especially crucial are the steps taken by the UN. Through the General Assembly, the United Nations established the C-24 in 1962, with the intention of monitoring and making recommendations regarding



the implementation of the 1960 Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries. After the disbanding of the Committee on Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories, the C-24 took on itself the task of studying information transmitted as prescribed under Article 73 e of the Charter. The C-24 is a subsidiary of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee. The Fourth Committee collects the reports of the C-24 and drafts resolutions. Additionally, the week of 25th-31st of May has been officially declared the International Week of Solidarity with the Peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories.

**Other Countries:** Some other countries are involved with NSGTs for historical reasons. For example, former European colonial powers such as Belgium and the Netherlands continue to have complex relationships with their former colonies, often involving them with the issue of NSGTs. Not only the colonizers are involved though, as nations with a past as colonies such as India, Indonesia, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka often outrightly express their supportive opinion that current NSGTs should gain full autonomy, influencing the decisions made regarding the agenda.

**Related Organizations:** The Pacific Islands Forum and African Union are organizations that are largely made up of old colonies, and thus being an NSGT is an experience that a large number of their members have gone through in the past. This leads to situations such as the establishment of a Special Committee on Decolonization within the African Union, which currently strongly advocates for the self-determination of Western Sahara, an NSGT issue they are directly related to. They have also been known to operate together with the UN regarding this topic in the past. While the Pacific Islands Forum did not choose to get involved in New Caledonia's referendum in 2023, it can be seen that they have a stance on the topic of NSGTs and support territories going through this process.



## Timeline of Events

<b>Date</b>	<b>Description of event</b>
<b>1418-1620</b>	<b>The time period that is considered as the Age of Discovery</b>
<b>1776</b>	<b>The Declaration of Independence is signed by the USA's founding fathers</b>
<b>December 14, 1946</b>	<b>The GA, by its resolution 66 noted a list of 72 Territories to which Chapter XI of the Charter applied</b>
<b>1946</b>	<b>The United Nations established the Trusteeship Council</b>
<b>November 27, 1961</b>	<b>The "Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples" is adopted</b>
<b>1963</b>	<b>The C-24 is established to examine and ease NSGTs actions towards self-determination</b>
<b>1992</b>	<b>SIDS are recognized as a special case both for their environment and development at the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development</b>
<b>1994</b>	<b>The Trusteeship Council suspends its operations on 1 November 1994, a month after the independence of Palau, the last remaining United Nations Trust Territory.</b>



<b>1994</b>	<b>The GA reaffirms the right of self-determination for NSGTs and defines four options for their future: independence, free association, integration with another state, or an option freely determined by the people.</b>
<b>2023</b>	<b>The Pacific Regional Seminar on Decolonization is held</b>

## Relevant UN Resolutions and Other Documents

[IMPORTANT DATES IN THE HISTORY OF COLONIES AND COLONIALISM](#)

[OVERVIEW OF WESTERN COLONIALISM](#)

[ALL DECOLONIZATION RELATED RESOLUTIONS](#)

[THE CIA WORLD FACTBOOK](#)

[A/RES/64 \(I\) \(14 December 1946\)](#)

- Establishment of the Trusteeship Council

[A/RES/1514\(XV\) \(1960\)](#)

- Declaration on the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples

[A/RES/1654 \(XVI\) \(27 November 1961 and every year since\)](#)



- Report on the implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence

[A/RES/5446/\(II\) \(1963\)](#)

- Activities of foreign economic and other interests which are impeding the implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence

[A/RES/75/420 \(2020\)](#)

- Question of Western Sahara

## **Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue**

As mentioned throughout this report, the United Nations has taken many initiatives, some continuing to this day. Especially prominent are the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples and the work that C-24 does. Furthermore, there is an annual resolution focused on monitoring the situation of NSGTs.

One of the most prominent issues is however the unwillingness of some administering powers to grant NSGTs immediate sovereignty. A strong example of this comes from the Chagos Archipelago. Although it is not considered a non-self-governing territory by the UN, a former NSGT itself, Mauritius, is in an international battle with the United Kingdom to enable the Chagos Archipelago to either gain autonomy or become an NSGT. The Chagos Archipelago was split from Mauritius during the period when it was still an NSGT under the rule of the UK.

Even though the International Court of Justice in its most recent ruling determined that the UK's claim on the archipelago wasn't rightful because of their forceful actions, which included evicting the residents from the islands, in 1965 as they claimed them as their own.



The United Kingdom has however ignored this ruling on the grounds that it is "advisory." Mauritius is adamant in its claim on the archipelago and shows strong reasoning supported by Botswana among others. Mauritius declared that "If the Chagos Archipelago was not part of the self-determination unit of Mauritius, then it would follow that it was a *separate* self-determination unit". This implies that either the Chagos Archipelago must be a part of Mauritius, or it has had a separate self-determination process, both options rendering the possession of the UK of the archipelago unjust. Evidently, even if a United Nations organ brings the solution, it has not always been possible to clear up the issue, leading to the search for alternative remedies.

## Possible Solutions

Throughout the attempts to tackle the issue of self-determination for non-self-governing territories, one large issue is that the voice of the indigenous community is often not heard. Although they are the original residents before the times of European colonialism, and are the pillars that uphold the tradition, cultural values, and often also nature preservation, as can be seen by the situations such as in the Falkland Islands they have great trouble partaking in political decisions. Furthermore, Argentina's continued claim on the Falkland Islands must also be settled. Thus, any attempt at an improved solution must consider these.

A possible approach could be the implementation of a co-dependent model, where all of the governmental decision-making power is as quickly as reliably as possible transferred to the local authorities. This would enable these NSGTs to decide on their political situation entirely on their own without any outside influence.

Considering that many of them have unique situations, such as being Small Island Developing States, that would make it difficult for them to be an entirely self-reliable nation anytime soon, there however must be some remaining



relationships. This could be done through means such as economic and social agreements. Joint economic ventures and the continuation and reinforcement of trade relationships are exemplary, as they would increase the economic gains of both sides and would ensure the continuation of an economic interest of the former administering power in the area.

While this may be a promising beginning, some issues must be addressed. The most important one is ensuring that the former NSGT does not become entirely economically dependent. A gradual decrease in economic ties up to a point could thus be beneficial.

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