

# Special Political and Decolonization Committee

*Thomas Jefferson Model United Nations Conference*  
**TechMUN XXVI**

---



---

**High School General Assembly**  
**Co-Chair: Akhil Rekulapelli**  
**Co-Chair: David Yan**

TechMUN | | Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and  
Technology | | April 20-21, 2018

*A word from your chairs:*

Hello delegates!

My name is Akhil Rekulapelli, and I am excited to be one of your chairs for SPECPOL during TechMUN 2018! I am a current senior at TJ and have been doing Model UN since my freshman year. Along with Model UN, I've been rowing on TJ's crew team for the last four years and am also on our Quiz Bowl team. When I'm not doing any of that, you can probably find me helplessly watching DC sports teams choke in the playoffs, reading biographies, or eating ice cream by the bucket. Committee wise, find collaboration, more than anything, to be key in producing a coherent resolution, and I'm excited to see solutions that could bring us one step closer to colonizing Mars, and resolving a devastating armed conflict. If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to email David and I at [specpoltechmun2018@gmail.com](mailto:specpoltechmun2018@gmail.com).

My name is David Yan and I'll be your other chair. I'm currently a senior, and this is my third year in TJ Model UN. Outside of MUN, I research in the neuroscience lab, am involved in TJ Minds Matter, and work on an indie music website. When I'm not busy with my tiring second semester senior schedule, you can catch me thrifting clothes, hanging out with my friends, or rewatching Community. When we meet in April I hope to hear you engaged in lively debate, see you collaborating with others, and overall enjoying yourselves. From colonizing the far reaches of our universe to diffusing a tense conflict in a volatile part of the world, I can't wait to hear the clever solutions you come up with.

Best, Akhil and David



## Topic 1: Colonization of Outer Space

### *Introduction*

Since the discovery of fossil fuels, and advent of myriad processes to utilize these fossil fuels to produce energy, Earth has become increasingly strangled by the grip of rising carbon emissions. Such emissions have caused for an increase in our global temperature, leading to rising sea levels, increasing desertification, and a higher rate of catastrophic weather events. Yet, even if we are able to address the issue of global warming due to carbon emissions, we are also confronted by the issue of a rapidly increasing population. At this rate, whether it is due to inhospitable conditions or simply too many people, it may soon become more viable for humans to start searching for additional places to call home.

Numerous agreements, treaties, and conventions of the UN have defined the laws regarding outer space. However, there exist five main ones: the Outer Space Treaty of 1967, the Rescue Agreement, the Liability Convention, the Registration Convention, and the Moon Agreement (Williams-Alvarez). The Outer Space Treaty essentially developed the foundation for further conventions and agreements, and was the first comprehensive resolution regarding laws in outer space. It emphasizes that countries utilize outer space for peaceful, non-militaristic purposes, along with preventing the discharge of nuclear weapons in outer space (“Outer Space Treaty”).

Secondly, the Rescue Agreement dictates that all agreeing parties must make all efforts to save astronauts and equipment from outer space, as well as recover any astronauts and objects that have landed in their territory from outer space, and return such objects to the possessing party (“Rescue Agreement”). In addition, the Liability Convention indicates that when an entity launches an object into space, and such object crashes into another space object, that entity is liable for any damages caused to satellites, space stations, or any other space objects. This



ensures that all space launches are performed in good faith, and with full acknowledgement of how deliberately planned a space launch must be in order to attain the desired goal of either an orbiting craft or a craft designed to reach extraterrestrial objects (“Liability Convention”).

The Registration Convention provides an organized way for parties to register their spacecraft with the United Nations, and the craft’s subsequent launches, functions, and orbital information (“Registration Convention”). Finally, the Moon Agreement applies the contingencies provided by the Outer Space Treaty to the Moon itself, requiring all exploration to be for peaceful purposes. Moreover, the agreement indicates that no country, NGO, or corporation can own or claim land on the Moon. It also stipulates that resource exploitation on the Moon, when it becomes possible, must be governed by an international organization under the United Nations. As countries are starting to explore the prospect of Moon colonization, delegates are encouraged to additionally create such an organization in order to demonstrate the UN’s accordance to the Moon Agreement (“Moon Agreement”). The topic of space colonization is one that is truly multi-faceted, and will require the mobilization of numerous sectors of the governments and economies of interested nations.

### ***Public Ventures***

Currently numerous countries are exploring the prospect of establishing space colonies, whether they be located on the moon or Mars. The United States and UAE are at the forefront of the colonization of Mars, with the United States aiming to have humans in low Mars orbit sometime in the 2030s, and the UAE aiming to have a settlement on Mars by 2117, having already started construction in the vast desert that dominates the country (Griggs).





### These countries have the biggest space budgets

Million US Dollars, 2013



Source: OECD

Figure 1. Countries with the largest space budgets. Retrieved from the World Economic Forum.

Yet, as shown in Figure 1, even at the top there is a large disparity between space spending in countries. With the Moon not being fully explored and this difference in experience and technology, it becomes easier for countries with the necessary resources to establish a monopoly over the resources on the Moon, Mars, and asteroids. Therefore it is imperative that delegates take into consideration the current designation of space as “international waters” in order to determine the best way to make space travel accessible to all nations.

#### ***Private Ventures***

Although numerous public ventures exist to colonize space, delegates must also take into account the rapidly growing private sector of space colonization. SpaceX, headed by Tesla CEO Elon Musk, is widely regarded as the company at the forefront of private space colonization. Musk intends on not only creating a human settlement on Mars, but notably has the goal of living his last years on Mars (Roberson; Becque). Musk intends on sending humans to Mars as early as 2024, with the ultimate goal of constructing a city and whole civilization on the Red Planet. Additionally, Jeff Bezos, CEO of Amazon, has teamed up with Blue Origins, a private spaceflight firm, in order to devise a cargo delivery service to the Moon by 2020. Similarly,



Moon Express hopes to also go to the Moon, but rather than just have a cargo delivery service, colonize the Moon much like how SpaceX, NASA, and the UAE have aspired to do (Roberson).

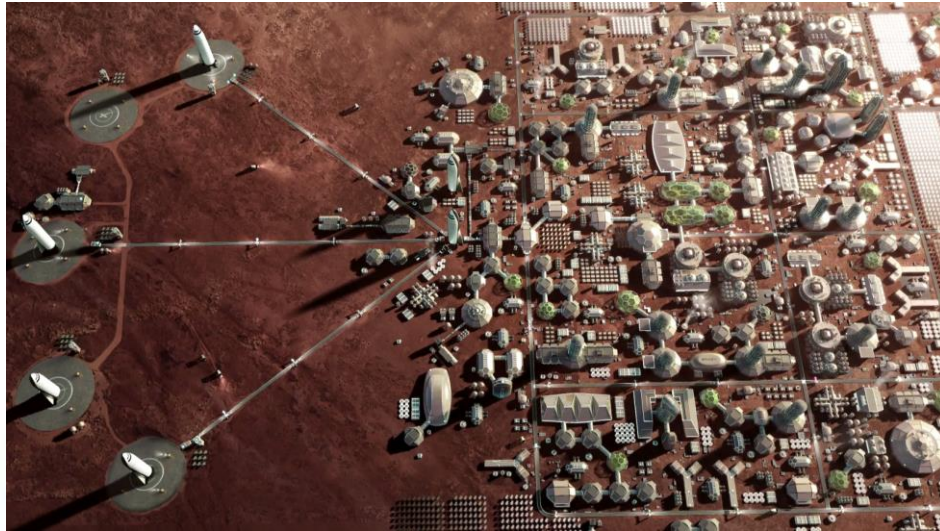


Figure 2. SpaceX's proposed city plan for Mars. Retrieved from *Engadget*.

Space colonization is a topic that has captivated the world even before the time of space flight. From the development of the Stanford Torus as a possible apparatus for space colonization, to the evolution of terraforming as a way to make planets more hospitable to humans, the possibilities are endless.

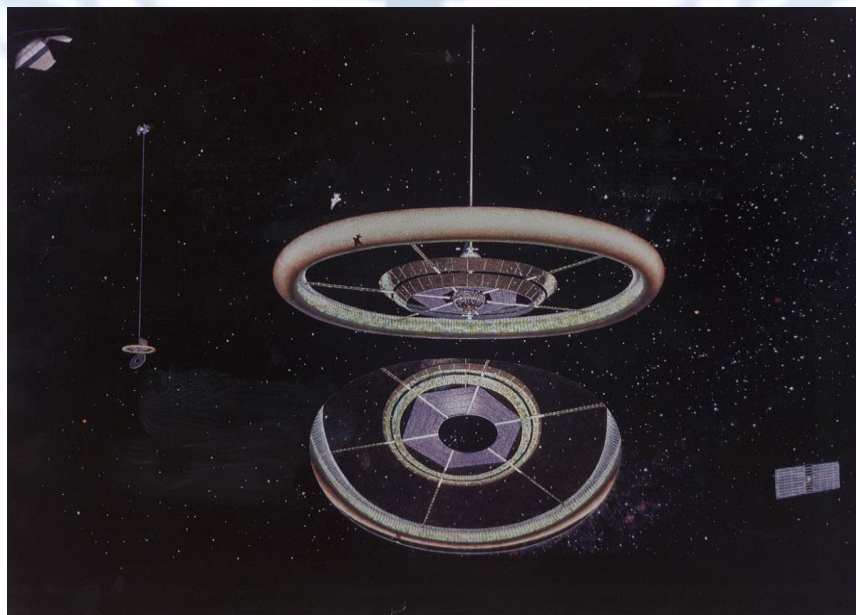


Figure 3. Stanford Torus depiction painted by Daniel E. Davis.



Delegates must be able to address the political intricacies of space colonization, and even provide options for UN involvement in space colonization, while also maintaining the diplomacy and good faith needed for a simulation of the United Nations.

### ***Questions to Consider***

1. Should mankind be permitted to colonize space?
2. Should measures be put in place to prevent larger countries from gaining a monopoly over space mining and other forms of resource exploitation? If so, how can we ensure that smaller countries also have a share of the wealth?
3. How do we regulate private companies interested in space colonization?
4. Should there be an international organization created to regulate the exploitation of resources on the moon, then how would this organization be run?

### **Works Cited**

- Becque, Elien Blue. "Elon Musk Wants to Die on Mars." *The Hive*, Vanity Fair, 29 Jan. 2015,.
- Griggs, Mary Beth. "All the countries (and companies) trying to get to Mars." *Popular Science*, 29 Sept. 2017
- "Liability Convention." *United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs*, United Nations
- "Moon Agreement." *United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs*, United Nations
- "Outer Space Treaty." *United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs*, United Nations
- "Registration Convention." *United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs*, United Nations
- "Rescue Agreement." *United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs*, United Nations
- Roberson, Bill. "As billionaires ogle Mars, the space race is back on." *Digital Trends*, 22 June 2017
- Williams-Alvarez, Jennifer. "What you need to know about the laws of space." *Engadget*, 14 July 2016



## Topic 2: Yemeni Civil War

### *Introduction*

In January of 2011, the first of many deadly protests erupted in Yemen. This conflict pitted supporters of President Ali Abdullh Saleh, the leader of Yemen for thirty-three years, against protestors who called for a change of power ("Arab Uprising"). Saleh had originally agreed to not seek re-election, however he backed out of this agreement when the time came to broker his transfer of power ("Arab Uprising"). This controversy caused the Hashid tribal federation, a loose grouping of tribes situated in northern Yemen, to back the protestors (Schmitz). Eventually, Saleh would be seriously injured in the conflict and his deputy, Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi, would take over as leader ("Arab Uprising").



Figure 4. Hashid area of Yemen

In the tumultuous aftermath of this change in leaders, the weakened Yemen came under attack from the terrorist group Al-Qaeda. These attacks juxtaposed with a general disillusionment of the political climate in Yemen led to the formation of the Houthi movement, a Shia Muslim minority group that still supported former president Saleh ("Yemen Crisis"). With





growing support for this rebel group, the neighboring country Saudi Arabia decided to move in defense of Hadi, and began to airstrike parts of Yemen as early as March of 2015 ("Yemen"). Presently, the Saudi Arabian and Houthi forces are locked in a stalemate with no discernable end in sight.

### ***The Problems***

Like most wars, the innocent civilians mostly hold the costs of the Yemeni conflict. Thousands of citizens have been either killed or injured in the years of fighting, and many millions have been displaced. The result of this massive toll is that nearly nineteen million people in Yemen require humanitarian assistance to gain access to simple necessities such as water, clothing, and shelter ("Yemen"). Not only is the data on human losses incredibly high, but the monetary losses are as well. Yemen has lost an estimated fourteen billion dollars in their infrastructure and production, and the prolongment of the war will only add to that figure (Bayoumy). With the mounting human and fiscal costs, it has become clear that nothing short of a global initiative will be able to compensate these losses and return Yemen to its pre-war state.



Figure 5. Infrastructure of Sana'a, Yemen's largest city.

Perhaps the most relevant issue to this SPECPOL committee regarding the Yemeni Civil War is the repeated abuse of human rights seen on both sides. First, the Saudi Arabian forces backing President Hadi have reportedly set off cluster munitions in their fights against Houthi soldiers ("Yemen"). This weapon releases up to hundreds of smaller bombs that can seriously injure and kill unsuspecting soldiers and civilians, and since 2008, has been explicitly banned by the UNODA's Convention on Cluster Munitions ("Convention on Cluster Munitions"). Additionally, Saudi Arabian airstrikes have violated international law by purposely targeting public facilities such as medical centers, and setting off weapons from civilian areas ("Nowhere Safe for Civilians").

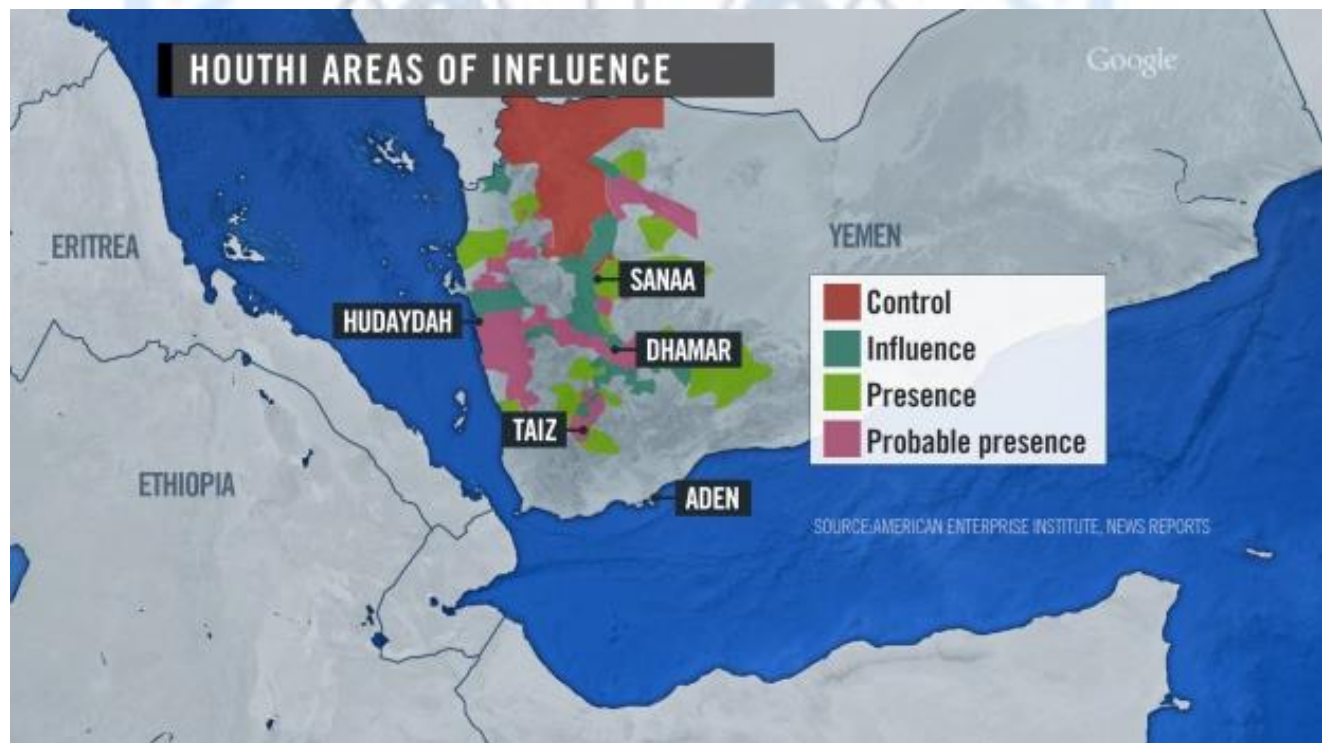


Figure 6. Houthi dominated areas of Yemen and locations of many Saudi Arabian airstrikes.

Like the Saudi Arabian troops, Houthi forces have committed other war atrocities in their conflicts. Most notably, Houthi forces are known to use imprecise weapons such as



mortars in heavily populated civilian centers ("Nowhere Safe for Civilians"). A case report on the crimes committed during multiple skirmishes found that the Houthi forces failed to distinguish between enemy combatants and civilians when opening fire, subsequently causing the deaths of many civilians. Finally, Houthi forces have reportedly seized critics, reporters, academics, and other non-combatant persons in their attempt to quell dissent ("Nowhere Safe for Civilians"). This aspect of the conflict should be pertinent to SPECPOL in determining whether or not to send personnel into Yemen.

Despite widespread global knowledge of the atrocities occurring in Yemen, many countries have continued to have a third-party effect on the war. From 2015 onwards, several countries have continued to supply weapons to Saudi Arabia, further adding fuel to the flame of conflict ("Yemen"). As a member of this SPECPOL committee, it is up to you to collaboratively agree on a course of action in this conflict while reconciling each country's personal stake in the war. There is undeniably a humanitarian crisis unfolding in Yemen, but the best method to address the citizen's needs remains unclear. Your job is to develop quick yet effective solutions to end the disastrous Yemeni Civil War.

### ***Questions to Consider***

1. As a larger question to discuss, which party is at fault here?
2. Does SPECPOL and the UN as a larger entity need to take sides to address this conflict?  
If so, how/who should SPECPOL choose to side with?
3. As the Yemeni Civil War has evolved into a drawn out and debilitating conflict, where will SPECPOL find the proper funding to address the issue?
4. How can member nations of SPECPOL reconcile humanitarian goals with their personal alliances in the conflict?





### Works Cited

“Arab Uprising: Yemen.” *BBC News*, BBC, 16 Dec. 2013.

Bayoumy, Yara. “Exclusive: Civil War Costs Yemen \$14 Billion in Damage and Economic...”

*Reuters*, Thomson Reuters, 17 Aug. 2016,

[www.reuters.com/article/us-yemen-security-damages/exclusive-civil-war-costs-yemen-14-billion-in-damage-and-economic-losses-report-idUSKCN10R2B7](http://www.reuters.com/article/us-yemen-security-damages/exclusive-civil-war-costs-yemen-14-billion-in-damage-and-economic-losses-report-idUSKCN10R2B7).

“Convention on Cluster Munitions.” *United Nations Office for Disarmament*, United Nations,

[www.un.org/disarmament/ccm/](http://www.un.org/disarmament/ccm/).

“Nowhere Safe for Civilians’: Airstrikes and Ground Attacks in Yemen.” *Amnesty International*,

18 Aug. 2015, [www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde31/2291/2015/en/](http://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde31/2291/2015/en/).

Schmitz, Charles. “Yemen's Tribal Showdown.” *Foreign Affairs*, 3 June 2011,

[www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/persian-gulf/2011-06-03/yemens-tribal-showdown](http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/persian-gulf/2011-06-03/yemens-tribal-showdown).

“Yemen Crisis: Who Is Fighting Whom?” *BBC News*, BBC, 30 Jan. 2018,

[www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29319423](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29319423).

“Yemen: The Forgotten War.” *Amnesty International*,

[www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2015/09/yemen-the-forgotten-war/](http://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2015/09/yemen-the-forgotten-war/)

### Position Paper Requirements

#### Overview

The Position Paper that delegates will be writing is a culmination of the most important pre-conference research that they have done, acting as a summary of research and the representative view of their state on the issues presented to their respective organ. Position Papers are due, in hard-copy format, before the first committee session on Friday. Any delegate



without a Position Paper will be deemed ineligible for awards, so remember to bring a copy for collection, and a copy for personal use! Remember to not plagiarize any aspect of the paper - our chairs and directors will be checking every paper for plagiarism and we expect a full MLA works cited for each. Failure to do so might result in delegate or school delegation disqualification!

### Basic Structure

- Times New Roman, 12pt font, single spaced
- A cover page with delegate name, nation, council, school
  - Delegates can add additional details, including national flags, seals, or any symbolic edits to Model United Nations, to demonstrate thoughtful presentation and attention to details.
- One page per topic with titled sections: background, country policy and possible solutions
  - Background: This section should include an overview of the topic. What is the current situation, and what are the main nations affected? This should be the shortest section on the paper.
  - Country Policy: What past actions has your country taken to address the issue at hand? What does your nation think about the topic? This section should take up a majority of your paper, as delegates should remain representative of their country's view throughout committee
  - Possible Solutions: This should be the most interesting part of a delegate's position paper. Solutions should incorporate both research and creativity, with a focus on improving past actions conducted by their respective council. Feel free



to come up with unique solutions to the dilemmas at hand which you plan to bring up during committee

- Complete MLA bibliography and in-text citations for all statistics and sources used

### Helpful Hints

---

- Remember to avoid first person pronouns! Staying in character is always important at Model United Nations conferences!
- Always use the active voice!
- Avoid fancy language which can distract your chairs from the true meaning of your paper!
- Remember to remain formal when writing your position paper and try to show all the research that you have done for committee, as this is the first impression that your chairs will have of you!