

Welcome to UGAMUNC XXVII! My name is Julia O'Neal, and I am so excited to chair the 6th session of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee with my co-chair, Joshua Walker. UGAMUNC is a conference that I have a deep passion and appreciation for, as I have been attending it since I was a freshman in high school. Now, as a first-year at the University of Georgia, I hope to do it justice as we work with you to have a successful weekend!

I am from Roswell, Georgia and am currently studying in the School of Public and International Affairs for a degree in international affairs with a French minor. I have been passionately involved in Model UN for 7 years, as well as the Sustainable Development Goals Club, the Swiss exchange program, and my school's film program. In my free time, I paint surrealist portraits, volunteer as a tech assistant at my local church, work with kids, and spend time with my friends, family, and four cats.

I would also like to introduce you to Joshua Walker, our incredible co-chair. He is a second-year double major in international affairs and economics with a French minor. He is involved in the Roosevelt Institute, the Economics Society, Campus Kitchen, and the American Society of Law, Medicine and Ethics. In his free time, he loves cooking, baking, reading, and hanging with friends at various Athenian coffee shops. This is his first year in Model UN, and he is excited to get involved!

In this conference, we ask that you work with us to ensure the safety and sanctity of your peers. COVID-19 has brought unprecedented change to every aspect of our lives, but we hope to provide normalcy and enrichment by continuing UGAMUNC, as modified as it may need to be to ensure the health of our delegates, faculty, and staff.

As a delegate in our committee, we expect that you will compete to the best of your ability and prepare adequately. With this said, we also would like to address that this committee will at times discuss politically sensitive topics. Thus, we expect that you will compete with the highest level of professionalism and debate responsibly. Additionally, as delegates of your country, we expect that the scope of your position papers and your proposed strategies in debate are in line with the views of your country. Delegates should consider the history, politics, culture, and demographics of the country which they represent. Even if you do not personally agree with these views, the work of SPECPOL is meant to put forth resolutions for each country and address problems facing the international community; therefore, it is imperative that each country is represented in its true form.

Please contact me with any questions you might have at my email provided below. Finally, please submit your completed position papers to me and Joshua by 11:59 PM on February 1st. We wish you the best of luck!

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# 1 Background

The Special Political and Decolonization Committee (SPECPOL) is the fourth General Assembly Committee of the United Nations. Originally, the fourth committee was solely responsible for decolonization and trusteeship issues. In 1945, there were 750 million people living under colonial power in either Trust Territories or non-self-governing territories. Due to the work of the committee, there are now only 2 million people living under these conditions, and all eleven UN-designated trusteeship territories have become independent.<sup>1</sup> Because of the severe decline of decolonization issues, the fourth committee's workload had severely decreased and merged with the Special Political Committee in 1993. The Special Political Committee branched out from the first committee, handling only certain political issues. It was briefly turned into the seventh main general assembly committee before merging with the fourth committee.<sup>2</sup>

The current SPECPOL committee is made of five Secretariat members, led by Secretary Sangeeta Sharma. Since it is one of the GA committees, every member nation participates and has one vote when voting on resolutions. It provides a unique forum for political discourse in an international, multilateral fashion.<sup>3</sup>

SPECPOL conducts the committee by annually considering a set of continuous issues every assembly. The annual topic list includes five decolonization related issues, the effects of atomic radiation, topics on information, reviewing peacekeeping operations, United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the Report of the Special Committee on Israeli Practices, and the peaceful use of outer space.<sup>4</sup> In conjunction with reviewing peacekeeping operations, SPECPOL has a set of special political missions that it reviews annually. Current missions include the implementation of a peace and security framework in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Region, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia to stabilize domestic election processes, and the mission in Columbia to build stable and lasting peace.<sup>5</sup>

This committee has played a vital role in the international system by focusing on very specific issues that have been overlooked in more broad international committees. Additionally, by annually revisiting the same issues, SPECPOL ensures continuous attention and policy development on issues such as the human rights of Palestinians and economics in non-governing territories. The special political missions also serve a vital role in focusing continued international support for very particular issues such as those in Syria, Myanmar, or Western Sahara. Without the continued focus by the UN, some of these issues would not gain as much international attention.

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<sup>1</sup>“Decolonization.” Accessed October 31, 2020. <https://www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/decolonization/>.

<sup>2</sup>“United Nations General Assembly Fourth Committee.” Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, October 15, 2020. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United\\_Nations\\_General\\_Assembly\\_Fourth\\_Committee](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations_General_Assembly_Fourth_Committee).

<sup>3</sup>“United Nations, Main Body, Main Organs, General Assembly.” United Nations. United Nations. Accessed October 31, 2020. <https://www.un.org/en/ga/fourth/>.

<sup>4</sup>“United Nations, Main Body, Main Organs, General Assembly.” United Nations. United Nations. Accessed October 31, 2020. <https://www.un.org/en/ga/fourth/>.

<sup>5</sup>United Nations Peacekeeping Operations, Special Political Missions and Other Political Presences. Accessed October 31, 2020. <https://www.unmissions.org/>.

## 2 Topic A: Consideration of Ethical Uses of Space in Advancing Society

### 2.1 Introduction

Space law is unlike that of Earth. While the governing laws of the international system of Earth are designed for purposes directly regarding preserving humanity and sovereignty, space has an entirely different set of requirements. The priority of space law is to promote science and sustainability. International treaties have been set forth forbidding certain behaviours in space, but the treaties are not universally recognized.

Humanity is rapidly expanding at an unsustainable rate. For decades, this growth has opened up conversations of increasingly more realistic basis about the possibility of colonizing space and celestial bodies. Science fiction popularized a vision of humanity living on other planets, moons, or self-sustaining spaceships. However, current space law forbids this.

As the Specific Political and Decolonization Committee, the issue of reconsidering space law to account for human progress must be taken into account with peace and political sustainability in mind. The committee must address the possibility of loopholes that have emerged over time, clauses that have evolved in relevancy, and enforcement for the greater good of humanity. Rules regarding the proper use of space must be considered with both the present and the future in mind, as well as making sure solutions are ethical, sustainable, and fair.

### 2.2 History / Past UN Action

The end of World War II began the infamous Space Race between the United States and the Soviet Union. At the time, space travel was seen as a symbol of power amongst the global superpowers, each wanting to prove that their economic system could foster fruitful innovation. Competition pushed progress and, within a decade, the Soviet Sputnik program put the first man in space while the American Apollo program landed a man on the moon.<sup>6</sup> After the 1696 moon landing, space travel became less urgent for public image, but progress still ensued. The 1970s saw SkyLab, the American space station, while the 1980s brought a surge of satellite cameras to give better insight on our planet and others. The United States launched an extremely successful 30-year space program, ending in 2011. Of the more than 100 shuttle missions, only two were disastrous, killing 7 members each. The International Space Station (ISS) is another milestone in space exploration, specifically regarding cooperation and unification of humanity.

One fundamental moment in the history of space law was the adoption of the Outer Space Treaty, which sets out regulations for ethical and sustainable use of space. Formally known as the Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies, it is commonly referred to as the OST. It went through the process of drafting, adoption, and ratification throughout the 1960s.<sup>7</sup> It has been ratified by 110 states, with another 23 that have signed without ratification.

Some defining parts of the OST are its emphasis on peace, cooperation, sustainability, and responsibility. It emphasizes that the use of space must be universally beneficial to all mankind. Space is without sovereignty. It should not be colonized, polluted, or weaponized with weapons of mass destruction. Countries are responsible for any actions taken in space and are consequently responsible for any damage done.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup>“The Space Race.” History.com. A&E Television Networks, February 22, 2010. <https://www.history.com/topics/cold-war/space-race>.

<sup>7</sup>Wickramatunga, Robert. “United NationsOffice for Outer Space Affairs.” Accessed October 21, 2020. <https://www.unoosa.org/oosa/en/ourwork/spacelaw/treaties/introouterspacetreaty.html>.

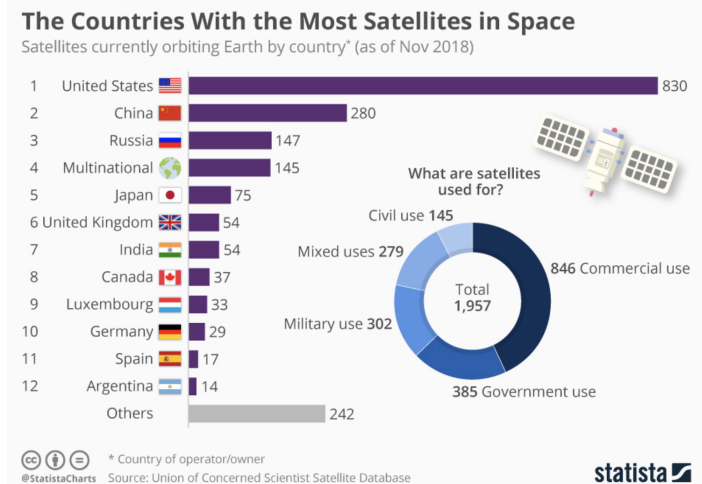
<sup>8</sup>Wickramatunga, Robert. “United NationsOffice for Outer Space Affairs.” Outer Space Treaty. Accessed October 21, 2020. <https://www.unoosa.org/oosa/en/ourwork/spacelaw/treaties/outerspacetreaty.html>.

## 2.3 International Involvement

The topic of space exploration is more relevant to some countries than others. The top 10 countries with large space programs are the United States, China, Russia, Japan, the United Kingdom, India, Canada, Germany, France, and Luxembourg.<sup>9</sup> The inserted graph shows prevalence, ownership, and usage of satellites.<sup>10</sup> However, many other countries have their own space programmes or are members of larger ones. There are about 40 space agencies globally, with some countries having multiple agencies, such as China or the Republic of Korea, and some agencies having multiple countries, such as the European Space Agency (ESA) or the Asia Pacific Space Cooperation Organization (APSCO).<sup>11</sup>

However, exploration and theoretical colonization is not the extent of progress. The discussion of the ethical use of space is a discussion affecting the entire international system. Although not all countries have the means to conduct their own space research, most countries benefit from space research in the form of satellite imagery, Global Positioning Systems, and satellite phones.

The International Space Station shows a successful example of multiple countries being involved in one singular collaborative space mission. Since 2000, the orbiting space base has had occupants from 17 different countries. The international cooperation seen in the development and usage of the ISS could potentially be a framework for future collaborative space endeavors.



Certain parts of the OST leave questions of whether the document should be revisited. The document specifies that all celestial bodies cannot be used or occupied by any state. While this is not a pressing issue, the concept of colonizing celestial bodies may become an eventual concern and may need to be revisited. The OST also specifies that any action taken in space must have a respective state, or several, which can be held accountable for it. This particularly raises questions of non-state actors who wish to use space and whether it should be allowed. Additionally, the specification that prohibits weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in space leaves loopholes. Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs) travel through lower levels of outer space despite being WMDs.

<sup>9</sup>Admin. "Verdict Media Limited." Aerospace Technology, January 23, 2020. <https://www.aerospace-technology.com/features/featurethe-10-countries-most-active-in-space-4744018/>.

<sup>10</sup>Chatham House. "Why We Need a New Global Code of Conduct for Outer Space." World Economic Forum, September 11, 2019. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/09/why-we-need-a-global-code-of-conduct-for-outer-space/>.

<sup>11</sup>Wickramatunga, Robert. "United NationsOffice for Outer Space Affairs." World Space Agencies webpage. Accessed October 21, 2020. <https://www.unoosa.org/oosa/en/ourwork/space-agencies.html>.

## 2.4 Vocabulary

- **Outer Space Treaty (OST):** a treaty commonly linked to the historical Antarctic Treaty in that it sought to prevent new forms of colonialism, specifically in outer space, while also preventing expansion-related competition<sup>12</sup>
- **Multinational Corporations (MNCs):** a corporation which “has facilities and other assets in at least one country other than its home country;” often uses one country to host its headquarters<sup>13</sup>
- **Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs):** “land-based, nuclear-armed ballistic missile[s] with a range of more than 3,500 miles (5,600 km);”<sup>14</sup> countries with ICBMs include the United States, Russia, China, France, North Korea, the United Kingdom and India<sup>15</sup>
- **Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs):** as defined by U.S law: “a destructive device, such as an explosive or incendiary bomb, rocket, or grenade; a weapon that is designed to cause death or serious injury through toxic or poisonous chemicals; a weapon that contains a biological agent or toxin; or a weapon that is designed to release dangerous levels of radiation or radioactivity”<sup>16</sup>

## 2.5 Questions to Consider

1. Is it ethical to capitalize on resources from outer space, or should celestial bodies be preserved?
2. Should corporations, specifically MNCs be allowed to conduct activities in space without direct approval of a singular state?
3. How heavily should space law be enforced, and what stops a global superpower from theoretically ignoring regulations and claiming a celestial body?
4. How can the committee define the gray area of “for the good of mankind” to properly enforce agreements involving use of space?
5. Is it ethical to send humans into potentially unsafe situations in space if it is for scientific benefit? What about animals?
6. Considering extensive travel time, would it be feasible to explore Mars and potentially other celestial bodies when occupation of it is forbidden? Would temporary visits make the effort worth the time it takes?
7. If non-state actors such as MNCs were to be allowed to pursue space exploration, how would monopolization of potential space industries be stopped?
8. If non-state actors were to be allowed to pursue space exploration when advancements and technology for it become more easily accessible, what stops potential terrorist groups from utilizing space?
9. How should space junk such as dead satellites be regulated?

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<sup>12</sup> “Outer Space Treaty.” U.S. Department of State. U.S. Department of State. Accessed October 21, 2020. <https://2009-2017.state.gov/t/isn/5181.htm>.

<sup>13</sup> Chen, James. “Multinational Corporation (MNC).” Investopedia. Investopedia, August 28, 2020. <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/m/multinationalcorporation.asp>.

<sup>14</sup> Gregersen, Eric. “ICBM.” Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica, inc. Accessed October 21, 2020. <https://www.britannica.com/technology/ICBM>.

<sup>15</sup> “Intercontinental Ballistic Missile.” Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, October 17, 2020. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intercontinental\\_ballistic\\_missile](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intercontinental_ballistic_missile).

<sup>16</sup> “WMD.” FBI. FBI, May 3, 2016. <https://www.fbi.gov/investigate/wmd>.

## 2.6 Further Reading

1. Space Law
2. Debating Outer Space Cooperation, Fourth Committee Hears Growing Number of Actors in Outer Space Could Risk Security of Space Assets, Limit Scope of Peaceful Uses Meetings Coverage and Press Releases
3. Fourth Committee Approves Draft Resolution on Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, as Delegates Conclude General Debate | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases
4. Benefits Stemming from Space Exploration
5. What is space junk and why is it a problem?

### 3 Topic B: Maintaining Peace in the Kurdish Region

The Kurds are an ethnic-linguistic group of people who originated from the Zagros mountains in the Middle East. Today, their population (estimated at 25 million to 30 million) has spread out across much of the Middle East and makes up a large portion of their population. They are the fourth largest ethnic group in the Middle East.

Because of their unique origin, the Kurds have proposed the formation of the State of Kurdistan (shown in image<sup>17</sup>), which translates to “Land of the Kurds”. The proposed state rides the border between Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Iran, and Armenia, where the majority of the Kurdish population lives. The majority of the land lies in Turkey. This state is theoretical, seeing as the sovereignty for the land it requires belongs to the five respective countries. As the Special Political and Decolonization Committee, the mandate specifies peacekeeping and decolonization as two of the issues SPECPOL is responsible for, both of which apply to the issue of peace in the Kurdish region.

#### 3.1 History

Although their exact ethnic origins are unknown, the Kurdish people can be traced back to the Kurdish region for thousands of years. They primarily lived as nomads, herding animals in the Zagros region and Mesopotamian plains. They are primarily Sunni Muslims, although not exclusively. Their language originates from Persian and Pashto as a group of dialects. They have largely remained apolitical in terms of the international system: the Kurds have never had an established state for themselves, despite having organized into tribes and dynasties. Sheikh-led tribes were common for a while, but eventually, the Kurds integrated into society and lost their tribal structure.<sup>18</sup>

After World War 1, the Kurdish nationalist movement began to take root. Despite never having a solidified state, the promise of one sparked interest when The Treaty of Sèvres was signed in 1920. Supported by one of US President Woodrow Wilson’s 14 points, it recognized the formation of Kurdistan, among other Arab states. Unfortunately for the Kurds, this treaty was left unratified and soon after, it was overwritten by the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne.

The awarding and immediate revocation of recognition was a shock to the Kurdish people. It sparked a movement of nationalism in the Kurdish people, specifically the Kurds in the designated region, which has continued on to the present day. They have consistently advocated for the creation of their own state so that they’re no longer a stateless minority group, but they have not had any success.<sup>19</sup> Their continuous desire for their own state stems largely from their strong ethnic nationalism. The Kurds feel a stronger sense of nationalism in their ethnic identity than in their national identity, which provides a basis for a possible case for statehood.

Not all Kurds pursue the formation of Kurdistan in the same manner. The Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) is a group of Kurdish nationalist extremists who are recognized as a terrorist group by Turkey. Their presence in the Middle East is a threat to international security and peace in the region. From July 2015 to October 2020, over 5000 people have been killed as a result of their violence.<sup>20</sup> Amongst the desires of the peaceful Kurds, the presence of the PKK must also be addressed by the committee.

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<sup>17</sup> “Who Are the Kurds?” BBC News. BBC, October 15, 2019. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29702440>.

<sup>18</sup> Tikkanen, Amy. “Kurd.” Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica, inc. Accessed October 21, 2020. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Kurd>.

<sup>19</sup> “Kurdistan.” Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica, inc. Accessed October 21, 2020. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Kurdistan>.

<sup>20</sup> “Turkey’s PKK Conflict: A Visual Explainer.” Crisis Group, October 9, 2020. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/content/turkeys-pkk-conflict-visual-explainer>.



### 3.2 International Community / UN Involvement

The majority of UN involvement in the Kurdish region has been focused on human rights, de-escalation of conflict, and humanitarian aid. However, in 2017, the UN Security Council voted against a referendum to establish independence for Iraqi Kurds. The member states cited their reasons for being that the referendum would be “destabilizing,” especially in the fight against terrorist group ISIL, which the Kurdish forces have been instrumental in. The goal is to postpone the referendum until a better time.<sup>21</sup>

Turkey is the sovereign nation most affected by the issue of Kurdish independence. 20% of Turkey is made of Kurds, and half of the Kurds are Turkish. It largely denies the issue and does not fully recognize their presence and unity. They are referred to as “mountain Turks” and their language and culture are repressed.<sup>22</sup>

Other countries involved respond differently. Egypt is a large supporter of the Kurdish independence movement. Iraq, in 2005, awarded the Kurds an autonomous zone. It has self-governing powers but the 2017 vote for independence was incomplete.

### 3.3 Vocabulary

- **Nation:** A group of individuals who share similar values, cultural aspects, and history<sup>23</sup>
- **State:** An organized political unit under one government, expressing the value of sovereignty over political, economic, and legal function<sup>24</sup>
- **PKK:** Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê: Kurdistan Workers' Party, an organization based in Turkey and Iraqi Kurdistan engaged in armed conflict with the Turkish state for self-determination for the Kurds<sup>25</sup>
- **Sunni Muslim:** A member of the branch of Islam that accepts the first four caliphs as rightful successors to Muhammad<sup>26</sup>

### 3.4 Questions to Consider

1. What constitutes having a right to statehood?
2. If Kurdistan were to officially form, how would the Kurds obtain the land from other states?
3. If Kurdistan were to officially form, what would happen to the non-Kurdish people in potential Kurdish territory who identify strongly with the state they are currently in?
4. How can the committee appeal to the interests of the Kurdish people while not entertaining the PKK?
5. How does the conflict for Kurdistan compare to other conflicts of nationalist boundaries, such as Palestine or Kashmir?

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<sup>21</sup>Wires, News. “UN Security Council Opposes Kurdish Independence Vote.” France 24. France 24, September 22, 2017.

<sup>22</sup>The Kurds in Turkey. Accessed October 21, 2020. [https://fas.org/asmp/profiles/turkey\\_background\\_kurds.htm](https://fas.org/asmp/profiles/turkey_background_kurds.htm).

<sup>23</sup>“Nations and States.” SparkNotes. SparkNotes. Accessed October 17, 2020. <https://www.sparknotes.com/us-government-and-politics/political-science/nations-and-states/section1/>.

<sup>24</sup>Duignan, Brian. “State.” Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica, inc. Accessed October 17, 2020. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/state-sovereign-political-entity>.

<sup>25</sup>“PKK Definition and Meaning: Collins English Dictionary.” PKK definition and meaning | Collins English Dictionary. HarperCollins Publishers Ltd. Accessed October 21, 2020. <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/us/dictionary/english/pkk>.

<sup>26</sup>“Sunni Muslim.” Vocabulary.com. Accessed October 21, 2020. [https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/Sunni Muslim](https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/Sunni%20Muslim).

### 3.5 Further Reading

1. (ESTIMATED PUB DATE) THE KURDS: RISING EXPECTATIONS, OLD FRUSTRATIONS
2. KURDISH NATIONALISM IN THE MIDDLE EAST
3. Kurdistan - Iran
4. The oppression of the Kurds and possible solutions

## 4 Topic C: Hong Kong's Sovereignty and Global Involvement

### 4.1 Introduction

The United Nations, from its mid-20th-century beginnings, has always valued the principle of self-determination. One of its many tools for ensuring that the population of the world gains access to this simple right is the fourth General Assembly, a body that, by its most fundamental definition, strives to “decolonize” those who desire political participation and self-determination. Unfortunately, the concept of decolonization has become even more difficult to apply in the 21st century, and one of the starkest examples of these complications is the historically-charged case of Hong Kong.

The polity's past is riddled with colonialist intervention, state handovers, and a historically unique political situation. Being under a “one country, two systems” framework, Hong Kong is meant to have expansive self-determinism. However, recent events have led many in Hong Kong to believe that their legally-protected rights are being brushed aside by the Chinese government, and, with Hong Kong being an international trading power (ranked 8th in the world in foreign trade<sup>27</sup>), the issue is hardly a regional one. Protesters have been demanding reclamation of their protected rights for well over a year, so this particular situation seems to be one that should be addressed by the global community.

The goal of this body will be to thoroughly unpack the issues of alleged Chinese intervention in what should be a mostly-autonomous political unit, as well as discussing the general issues of 21st-century self-determinism and the responsibilities of involved/uninvolved actors in addressing it.

### 4.2 History of Hong Kong

Hong Kong's past has featured a unique blend of war, drugs, colonialism, and sub-state autonomous rule. The region's beginnings opened within the setting of 3rd-century B.C. east Asian imperialism when, under the Qin Dynasty, the area came under Chinese rule. The First Opium War between the British and Chinese Empires in the mid-1800s, however, ceded Hong Kong Island (the southernmost portion of the region) to Great Britain through the Treaty of Nanjing. With its ideal geographic situation, being bordered by both the South China Sea and China, Great Britain began to desire greater regional control, sparking the Second Opium War. Through the Convention of Beijing in 1860 and the Second Convention of Peking in 1898, the modern boundaries of Hong Kong were set and the region was now totally controlled by the British Empire<sup>28</sup>.



According to the agreements between China and Great Britain, however, Hong Kong was scheduled to be returned to China on July 1, 1997 (99 years after the Second Convention of Peking). Between 1898 and 1997, the only disruption to British control of Hong Kong came during World War II when Japan controlled much of Southeast Asia. However, Great Britain maintained its presence, and in 1982, leaders from both

<sup>27</sup>Cheung, Tai Ming. "10. HONG KONG'S STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE UNDER CHINESE SOVEREIGNTY." (1998).

<sup>28</sup>Little, Becky. "How Hong Kong Came Under 'One Country, Two Systems' Rule," September 3, 2019. <https://www.history.com/news/hong-kong-china-great-britain>.

China and the U.K. met to discuss the transition set to incur in 15 years<sup>29</sup>. (image)<sup>30</sup>

In 1984, the Sino-British Joint Declaration was signed, outlining the terms and stipulations of the transition, as well as a plan for post-transition Hong Kong and its political/economic institutions and ties with China. The declaration allowed Hong Kong to maintain its current autonomy and its social, legal, judicial, and economic systems, until 2047. In essence, the region was to “remain unchanged for 50 years,” per the agreement. This meant that Hong Kong could continue its capitalist lifestyle while reaffirming the existing rights of speech, religion, press, and assembly. Under this “one country, two systems” rule, Hong Kong became a Special Administrative Region with full autonomy under China<sup>31</sup>. The largest change was that China now had the power to appoint Hong Kong’s executive; however, it claimed it would do so in accordance with the region’s democratic election results<sup>32</sup>.

The first hints at China’s unwillingness to fully adhere to the deal came in the early 2010s when Chinese leaders began affirming to British diplomats that the U.K. had no authority to regulate China’s abidance to the agreement. In fact, the Chinese ambassador to Great Britain, Ni Jian, even claimed that the Sino-British Joint Declaration was “now void and covered only the period from the signing in 1984 until the handover in 1997.”

Protests have since sprung from Chinese intervention in Hong Kong’s domestic affairs, affairs that were supposedly protected under the joint declaration. For example, in August 2014, the Chinese government reformed the stipulations of Hong Kong’s electorate system of universal suffrage, now only allowing two or three candidates that are vetted by a committee of “pro-Beijing elites” to run for the executive. Essentially, China was now getting directly involved in Hong Kong’s democratic process, and the result was mass protests called the Umbrella Revolution<sup>33</sup>. Again, in 2016, protests were spurred throughout the region, this time in response to China’s new verdict that executive candidates who supported Hong Kong independence were no longer allowed to run<sup>34,35</sup>. In 2019, the Chinese government introduced an extradition bill that would allow Hong Kong to extradite alleged criminals to China for trial. Many claimed that this bill would expose those in Hong Kong to a flawed Chinese judicial system, and after months of protests opposing its implementation, the proposal was withdrawn<sup>36</sup>.

Most recently, protestors lined the streets on China’s National Day (October 1st), 2020 in defiance of Chinese intervention in Hong Kong affairs. Protestors were quickly shut down by police<sup>37</sup>. This comes only a few months after China passed a national security law in June of 2020 that severely curtails Hong Kong citizens’ rights to free speech, imposing penalties on those that promote secession, undermining the central government, terrorism, and foreign collusion<sup>38</sup>.

<sup>29</sup>Little, Becky. “How Hong Kong Came Under ‘One Country, Two Systems’ Rule,” September 3, 2019. <https://www.history.com/news/hong-kong-china-great-britain>.

<sup>30</sup>“Hong Kong Map and Satellite Image.” geology. Accessed October 17, 2020. <https://geology.com/world/hong-kong-satellite-image.shtml>.

<sup>31</sup>Cheung, Gary. “What Is the Sino-British Joint Declaration?” South China Morning Post, July 4, 2019. <https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/politics/article/3017318/explainer-what-sino-british-joint-declaration-and-what-does>.

<sup>32</sup>“Some Facts about the Basic Law.” Some Facts about the Basic Law - index.html. Accessed October 17, 2020. <https://www.basiclaw.gov.hk/en/facts/index.html>.

<sup>33</sup>Kaiman, Jonathan. “Hong Kong’s Umbrella Revolution - the Guardian Briefing.” The Guardian. Guardian News and Media, September 30, 2014. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/30/-sp-hong-kong-umbrella-revolution-pro-democracy-protests>.

<sup>34</sup>Staff, TIME. “Hong Kong Makes History With First Pro-Independence Rally.” Time. Time, August 5, 2016. <https://time.com/4440708/hong-kong-independence-china-localist/>.

<sup>35</sup>Iyengar, Rishi. “Hong Kong: Pro-Independence Candidate Barred From Elections.” Time. Time, August 3, 2016. <https://time.com/4436253/hong-kong-election-briefing-protests-edward-leung-china-independence/>.

<sup>36</sup>Li, Jeff. “Hong Kong-China Extradition Plans Explained.” BBC News. BBC, December 13, 2019. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-47810723>.

<sup>37</sup>Ramzy, Austin, Elaine Yu, and Tiffany May. “On China’s National Day, Hong Kong Police Quash Protests.” The New York Times. The New York Times, October 1, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/01/world/asia/hong-kong-protests-china.html>.

<sup>38</sup>Tsoi, Grace, and Lam Cho Wai. “Hong Kong Security Law: What Is It and Is It Worrying?” BBC News. BBC, June 30, 2020. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-52765838>.

### 4.3 Self Determination: History and Applications

Self-determination as a concept first took hold with the philosophical writings of Immanuel Kant<sup>39</sup>. These ideas, in conjunction with other notable philosophers (Rousseau, Locke, etc.), inspired colonies and countries such as the United States and France to use the principle of self-determination to overthrow the previously existing government structure<sup>40</sup>. This created a wave of nationalism in the late-18th century and early-19th century that fought against imperialist structures and spread self-determinist values<sup>41</sup>.

The wave of nationalism gave way to a new imperialism; colonial powers yet again began to carve up lesser developed countries and drain their resources. After World War I and II, decolonization efforts took hold, in part due to an international push for self-determination<sup>42</sup>. At the end of World War I, Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points detailed the creation of a League of Nations that would execute "a variety of geographic arrangements carrying out the principle of self-determination"<sup>43</sup>.

The United Nations, the more successful international version of the League, also made self-determination one of its foremost goals, even cementing its importance into the UN charter<sup>44</sup>. As one of its first actions, the UN signed a resolution subtitled "Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples," which moved to immediately take steps to give governmental power back to the people of Trusts and Non-Self-Governing Territories<sup>45</sup>.

The UN has had mixed success in juggling the important values of both self-determinism and sovereignty, and the increasingly contentious relations between Hong Kong and China introduce a new, complex problem for this committee to tackle.

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<sup>39</sup>Dryden, Jane. "Autonomy." Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Accessed October 17, 2020. <https://iep.utm.edu/autonomy/>.

<sup>40</sup>Kolla, Edward. "The French Revolutionary Origins of National Self-Determination – Edward Kolla: Aeon Ideas." Aeon. Aeon, October 17, 2020. <https://aeon.co/ideas/the-provocation-of-national-self-determination>.

<sup>41</sup>McLean, John. "History of Western Civilization II." Self-Determination and New States | History of Western Civilization II. Accessed October 17, 2020. <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/suny-hccc-worldhistory2/chapter/self-determination-and-new-states/>.

<sup>42</sup>cmvt. "Reasons for the End of Imperialism, Decolonization and Emergence of New Nation-States and Its Impact," September 5, 2015. <https://cmvtcivils.wordpress.com/2015/09/05/reasons-for-the-end-of-imperialism-decolonization-and-emergence-of-new-nation-states-and-its-impact/>.

<sup>43</sup>"Woodrow Wilson : Fourteen Points Speech (1918)." U.S. Embassy & Consulate in the Republic of Korea, February 11, 2020. <https://kr.usembassy.gov/education-culture/infopedia-usa/living-documents-american-history-democracy/woodrow-wilson-fourteen-points-speech-1918/>.

<sup>44</sup>"Chapter I: UN Charter." United Nations. United Nations. Accessed October 17, 2020. <https://www.un.org/en/sections/un-charter/chapter-i/index.html>.

<sup>45</sup>"Decolonization." United Nations. United Nations. Accessed October 17, 2020. <https://www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/decolonization/index.html>.

## 4.4 Vocabulary

- **Extradition:** “the removal of a person from a requested state to a requesting state for criminal prosecution or punishment”<sup>46</sup>
- **Nation:** a group of individuals who share similar values, cultural aspects, and history<sup>47</sup>
- **“One country, two systems”:** China’s current situation in which Hong Kong is given the abilities and sovereignty of a Special Administrative Region, maintaining basic autonomy, while still under Chinese territory<sup>48</sup>
- **Self-determinism:** the right of a people to determine its own destiny; a principle allowing a people to choose its own political status and to determine its own form of economic, cultural, and social development<sup>49</sup>
- **Sino-British Joint Declaration:** an agreement made in 1982 between Great Britain and China outlining the transition of Hong Kong from the British Empire to China, as well as Hong Kong’s future autonomy under the Chinese state<sup>50</sup>
- **State:** an organized political unit under one government, expressing the value of sovereignty over political, economic, and legal function<sup>51</sup>

## 4.5 Questions to Consider

1. What is the best balance between self-determination and sovereignty; that is, at what point should the global community be allowed to intervene a state’s sovereignty to help support self-determinist values?
2. In reviewing Hong Kong’s politically complex past, what is the best way to proceed with the issue of growing Hong Kong discontent towards the Chinese government?
3. Are the recent protests really just a tool of the minority, while the majority of Hong Kong citizens are not unhappy with Chinese intervention? If so, what action is appropriate for the global community to take and what action would be an overstep?
4. Are violent police interventions in protests a violation of basic speech rights? Human rights? If so, how can countries urge China to discontinue such abusive and violent practices?
5. How should your country react, in recognition of recent events, to increasingly contentious Chinese-Hong Kong relations? What is your country’s stance on the situation? Does it support intervention into Chinese affairs in order to establish/reestablish Hong Kong’s autonomy?
6. Upon further evaluation and analysis of the Sino-British Joint Declaration, is China truly breaching this agreement? If so, should the U.K. be allowed to intervene within the role as a regulatory body of the agreement?
7. Broadly, is the “one country, two systems” approach a reasonable one? Was such an approach to Hong Kong’s autonomy the best method of transitioning power from Great Britain to China, or was there a better solution?

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<sup>46</sup>“Extradition.” Legal Information Institute. Legal Information Institute. Accessed October 17, 2020. <https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/extradition>.

<sup>47</sup>“Nations and States.” SparkNotes. SparkNotes. Accessed October 17, 2020. <https://www.sparknotes.com/us-government-and-politics/political-science/nations-and-states/section1/>.

<sup>48</sup>Tam, Felix, and Clare Jim. “‘One Country, Two Systems’ Can Continue beyond 2047: Hong Kong Leader.” Reuters. Thomson Reuters, January 16, 2020. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-hongkong-protests/one-country-two-systems-can-continue-beyond-2047-hong-kong-leader-idUSKBN1ZF0NO>.

<sup>49</sup>“Self-Determination.” UNPO, September 21, 2017. <https://unpo.org/article/4957>.

<sup>50</sup>Cheung, Gary. “What Is the Sino-British Joint Declaration?” South China Morning Post, July 4, 2019. <https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/politics/article/3017318/explainer-what-sino-british-joint-declaration-and-what-does>.

<sup>51</sup>Duignan, Brian. “State.” Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica, inc. Accessed October 17, 2020. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/state-sovereign-political-entity>.

8. Could the “one country, two systems” approach work elsewhere in the world where different nations vie for rights, representation, and power under one state (such as the case of many groups in Africa due to 18th/19th-century colonialism)?

#### 4.6 Suggested Reading

1. Hong Kong’s Strategic Importance under Chinese Sovereignty
2. A Brief History of Protest in Post-Handover Hong Kong
3. Hong Kong: The Joint Declaration
4. In Pursuit of Sovereignty and Self-Determination: Peoples, States and Secession in the International Order
5. Hong Kong Economic Stats
6. OPINION: Hong Kong and the Independence Movement that Doesn’t Know Itself
7. Hong Kong’s Option to Secede