



ODUMUNC 2013
Issue Brief for the
GA Third Committee: SOCHUM



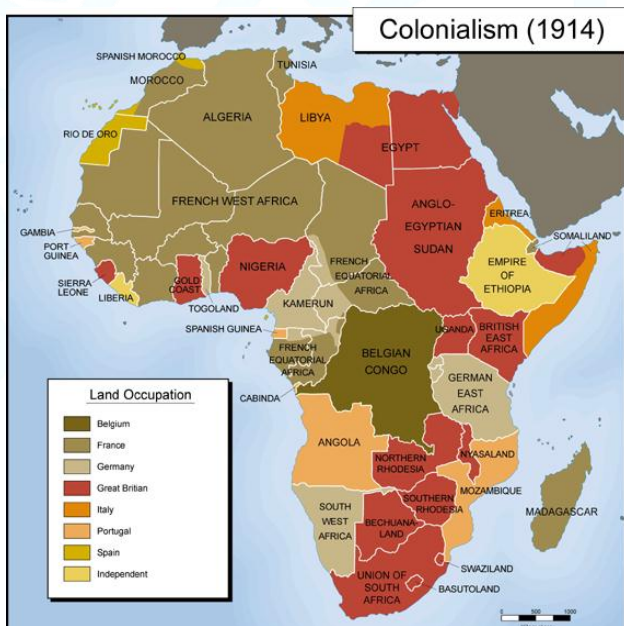
Addressing Methods for Achieving National Self-Determination

By: Douglas Johnson

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“Our reflex is to fear changes on the map out of concern for violence or having to learn the names of new countries. But in an age when any group can acquire the tools of violent resistance, the only alternative to self-determination is perpetual conflict.”

Parag Khanna, January 13, 2011 Foreign Policy



Source: exploringafrica.matrix.msu.edu

Introduction: The world is divided into nations. Those nations have been created in part by people coming together in a common cause, with common identities and language, seeking to peacefully coexist in a collective form. Many nations however, were created by lines drawn on a map, in rooms far away from the affected lands, with no attention given to those people who would have to coexist. The colonisation of the world was done by European superpowers of the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. The United States began this strategy of gaining footholds around the globe as well through from the time of the industrial revolution to the end of

World War II. Then something changed. People stood up and demanded their independence from their colonial rulers. The United States and European nations slowly began giving lands back to the indigenous populations, to rule the way they saw fit. But a large problem still existed. The lands that had been colonized were not representative of its citizenry. The continent of Africa was drawn into shape in Berlin, mostly by France, the United Kingdom, Germany and the Dutch. Iraq was drawn into existence by the United Kingdom with no concern of Shiite, Sunni or Kurdish populations. Countries became bounded by geographic phenomena while cultural ones were ignored. A river took precedent over a religion; a mountain became more important than a language.



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After the colonial powers withdrew, governments began taking shape that benefited the majority. Minorities faced segregation from political power, abuses at the hands of the government in power, even threats of violence and genocide. Occasionally, the minority becomes strong enough to develop a voice loud enough to be heard. In countries like Yugoslavia, the nation broke into Slovenia, Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and most recently Kosovo. Just last year, South Sudan became a sovereign nation, breaking free from Sudanese rule, which had long been seen as oppressive to the South Sudanese population. In some examples the process is peaceful. More often, there is great violence. The United States involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan can be seen as leftover conflicts stemming from ethnic poles being forced into political systems not of their own making. In either case, the inevitability of people to desire for a government representative of their own needs must be given appropriate attention.

The UN Third Committee and Self Determination: The United Nations has consistently advocated the rights of self-determination as a human right which should be protected. The definition of self-determination is not universally agreed upon, however, even within United Nation members. Three main ideas evolve from the idea. First, as is the case in the examples above, self-determination equals political independence. A lesser definition is autonomy in political activities, cultural identities and economic decisions. Finally, self-determination can be as simple as the ability to live as chosen without interference from a controlling party, such as governments or militaries. What a member of the United Nations may see as the real definition of the term creates the platform for which they will argue for or against another's rights.

While a member nation will have a broad sense of how it views self-determination, individual cases are dependent on a number of variables. It often becomes difficult to identify the variables that will skew a nation's view on a population's attempts to gain their collective rights. Some common examples are current relationships with the nation in question, former colonial connections, religions, languages and cultural identities, the possession of natural resources, and the possibility of destabilizing a region or the likelihood of violence. Nations will often disagree with each other in one part of the world, while agreeing somewhere else, for varying reasons.



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SOCHUM works closely with the United Nations Human Rights Council. This body consists of 47 member nations. During sessions of the committee, the reports from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights are taken under advisement and used as to create the conversation for drafting resolutions and expressing opinions. The goals set by this committee are often in parallel to the resolutions passed in the Third Committee. The Third Committee is often considered the agenda setting entity of smaller human rights organizations.

Issues Concerning Self Determination: Currently, there are a significant number of situations that fall directly under the topic of self-determination. While a certain few dominate the news cycle, member nations must be aware of all issues and prepared to discuss topics that will lead to all people in all nations to achieve their goals. Some of these are described briefly below. It should be noted that these issues are a small portion of the global cause for self-determination.

The countries of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) consistently support self-determination for colonized and occupied territories, such as Palestine. A more complicated issue is self-determination of territories that are part of a sovereign state, or secessionism. Examples include recognition of the former Serbian province of Kosovo, Catalonian or Scottish independence, or Kurdish independence. Most Non-Aligned countries oppose secessionism. Westerns and Latin America countries often are supportive, depending on national interests and attitudes toward specific issue of each case, thus they take a case-by-case approach.

Israel/Palestine: Perhaps the most well-known and publicized debate is the issue of how the Palestinian and Israeli people can peacefully coexist. While Palestinian supporters advocate for solutions from guaranteed representation in Israeli affairs to a separate Palestinian state, the nation of Israel is unlikely to concede their own self determined rights. The international community generally favors the Two-State Solution (TSS), with Palestinian self-rule assured through sovereign recognition of Israel (assuring its right to exist) and Palestinian sovereignty over its own territories, with land swaps to compensate for the effects of Israeli settlement in Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT). This issue has led to much violence and turmoil in the



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region, which has been the bell weather topic in between for the Islamic world, affecting all aspects of relations between Islamic countries and the rest of the world.

The UN General Assembly cannot grant Palestine membership in the UN—a Security Council prerogative—but has extended official observer status, and may pass resolutions urging countries to recognize Palestinian sovereignty. Decisions on this issue have become even more complicated as the permanent members of the UN Security Council have often disagreed on the proposed solutions.

Falkland/Malvinas Islands: One of the last remnants of European colonisation is the Falkland/Malvinas Islands. The United Kingdom still claims the islands off the coast of Argentina, despite Argentina claiming that the islands proximity to their mainland should allow the archipelago to be under the Argentine flag. The residents on the island have been British citizens since the end of the Falkland War



Argentine soldiers read the news during the Falkland War.
Source: IBTimes.com

between the two nations in 1983. The residents have stated they choose to remain under British rule. Argentina has argued that the people in power residing on the islands are largely of British descent and the majority of indigenous Argentineans were removed from the island unwillingly over the years. While peace currently exists, there have been examples of protest as recently as before the 2012 Olympics.

Taiwan: One of the most complicated issues under self-determination is the political status of Taiwan. With roots of the problem stemming from the end of World War II, becoming more complicated after the Chinese Civil War, Taiwan is now recognized by some nations as the Republic of China, separate from the People's Republic of China (PRC). The PRC, however, sees



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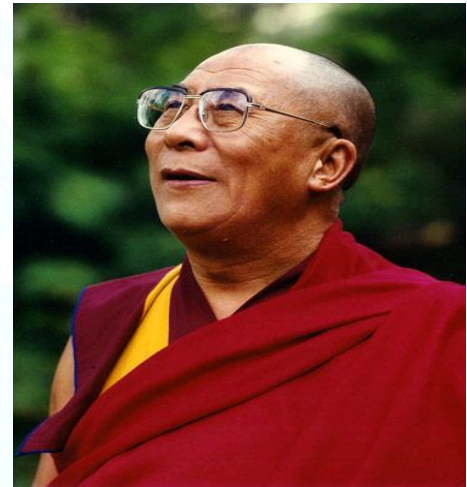
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Taiwan as an entity of its government, given special rights to self-govern, loyal to the PRC.

Tibet: Yet another concern in the PRC is the status of Tibet. Tibet is a region of the PRC in the southwest of the nation, bordering India, Nepal and Bhutan. The PRC has named the region Xizang. The Dalai Lama has spoken on the need for a free and independent Tibet, which holds little cultural connections with the PRC. While the Dalai Lama advocates for non-violence and peaceful protests, it is a common occurrence that violence erupts during protests. There are also numerous examples of Tibetan monks and citizens participating in ritual self-immolations.



Source: dalailama.com/biography

Kashmir: The region between India and Pakistan has been contested as under possession of both nations. A cold peace between the two nations exists as the two nations have started to agree that the Kashmir people should decide the future for the region. Kashmir people are the cultural bridge between the two nations; therefore, the opinions of the people of the nation are divided on the best course of action.

Syria: A civil war in Syria is currently underway, as rebels resisting the Assad presidency have been slowly gaining ground in their struggle for freedom. President Assad has been seen as heavily oppressive in his regime. The UN General Assembly has passed numerous resolutions condemning the violence of the Syrian government and military against its own people. The UN Security Council has stalled however, as the Russian Federation has vetoed any calls for action from the international community. Similar actions were allowed to take place in Libya, which led to the nation being able to overthrow Muammar Gaddafi and are believed to be the actions needed to give the rebels the upper hand in the Syrian conflict.



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Conclusion: The Third Committee has acted as the guide for the rest of the United Nations on the topic of self-determination. By setting general goals for the topic, the Third Committee has been able to call upon other entities in the United Nations, as well as member nations around the world to act in accordance with the ideals they agreed to in the resolutions that have come from the committee sessions. Those goals have to be consistent and applicable to any self-determination issue.

Further Readings:

http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/01/13/breaking_up_is_good_to_do

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/independence.htm>

<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/topic,4565c2252c,4565c25f3bf,45c30c2a0,0,,THEMREPORT,.html>

Topic-Based:

Israel/Palestine

<http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/category/topic/israel/palestine>

Taiwan

<http://www.taiwanembassy.org/UK/ct.asp?xItem=57422&ctNode=3244&mp=132&nowPage=1&pagesize=15>

The Falklands

<http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5jh5HaxQzBkgTTATNVBh0E1aiOo9g?dclid=CNG.0417e9ea5b22cfaaded171b1641444b.de1>

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2012/may/04/falkland-islands-argentine-olympic-advert>



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<http://www.nytimes.com/1982/06/05/world/un-resolution-on-falkland-war.html>

Tibet

<http://www.freetibet.org/>

<http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/tibetan-teens-die-immolating-china-17091690>

Kashmir

<http://www.foreignpolicyjournal.com/2012/07/21/kashmir-preparing-for-a-contingency/>

http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/09/29/kashmir_mass_graves?page=full

Syria

<http://www.foreignpolicy.com/category/topic/syria>