

SPECPOL

The Future of Colonial Africa (1960)



**39th Annual Model United Nations
Conference at St. John's High School**

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Letters from Chairs:

Welcome, Delegates,

My name is Adam Somerset, I'm a junior at SJ, and I will be chairing this committee alongside my co-chair, Anik Patel. I have participated in Model UN here at SJ since my freshman year and have attended a number of conferences ranging from local to national and international. I have been looking forward to chairing a committee since I was a freshman, sitting in the same chairs you all will be sitting in this October. Outside of MUN and other clubs, in my free time, I enjoy hunting, fishing, cooking, and playing my guitar. I am the operational manager on my family's beef cattle farm, am involved with the American Hereford Association, and am heavily invested in the show cattle community. I am super excited to meet all of you this October and cannot wait to hear your creative ideas and have thoughtful discussions!

I recognize that SPECPOL isn't typically a historical committee, but I wanted to switch it up a bit, especially because I enjoy participating in historical committees myself. I believe that decolonization and self-determination are incredibly important to understanding how the world came to be. So, I thought, historical committee + decolonization, boom, welcome to *The Future of Colonial Africa (1960)*, well, it was something along those lines. In all seriousness, this topic allows for nuanced debates and forces delegates to answer many difficult questions creatively. Rather than looking back on decolonization with hindsight, I wanted the committee to be placed in January of 1960, forcing delegates to use information only available to them at the time.

There have been times when I've been assigned to a committee I wasn't initially interested in, yet I've left those sessions with a broader perspective and a deeper understanding of issues from delegates with unique backgrounds. My point is that even if this committee is not

the topic you were hoping to be assigned to, you get from the committee what you put in. All I ask is that you give it a chance. Who knows, you may find you have a true passion for advocating for some obscure territory you have never heard of before. :)

Although position papers in this committee are not required, I **highly recommend** that all delegates write one. It is a great way to become familiar with the topic and your country's stance on various issues. As many of you are aware, MUN requires quick thinking, and one way to improve this skill is to have a thorough understanding of the conference, which starts with a position paper! Please email your position paper to me at the address below, and I will return it to you with our feedback when the conference comes. Please send your position papers **one week in advance** so that our feedback can be thorough rather than rushed.

Please feel free to email me at somera28@stjohnshigh.org with any questions or concerns.

See you in committee,

Adam Somerset '28

Dear Delegates,

I am very honored to co-chair this delegation about the future of colonial Africa in the 1960s. Colonialism has been a major source of controversy throughout history and could shape the future outlook. This is my first time chairing a conference, and I'm looking forward to seeing many excellent ideas and legislation passed.

I am a senior at Saint Johns high school and have been doing MUN since freshmen year. Last year, I had the opportunity to attend MUNUC at the University of Chicago as a delegate and thoroughly enjoyed the experience. I've also attended and helped out with every SJMUNC in my four years and am very glad you all are here.

Outside of MUN, I thoroughly enjoy watching sports, especially the NFL and NBA. I also enjoy hanging out with my friends and meeting new people. I am very excited to meet all of you. At school, I'm part of the investment club, SAAG, and HOSA. I also have a passion for history, which sparked my interest in our current topic about African Colonialism, so I'm very excited to see how all of you work together to find a solution.

Please feel free to reach out to me (patela27@stjohnshigh.org) or your head chair (somera28@stjohnshigh.org) if you have any questions. We look forward to meeting you all in October.

Anik Patel '27

History of the Problem:

During the closing decades of the nineteenth century, European powers competed for territory, motivated by nationalist rivalries, strategic military interests, and cultural ideologies, among other reasons. This rapid expansion, in which major powers included Britain, France, Germany, Belgium, and Portugal, was most commonly referred to as the Scramble for Africa. Otto von Bismarck, a German chancellor, in an attempt to regulate this rivalry, convened the competing nations at the Berlin Conference of 1884-85. The result of this conference was the General Act, which set rules for European territorial claims and commercial activity in Africa. European powers soon established administrations that reflected their own interests rather than the already existing African political divisions and goals. Decades later, emerging African states were forced to build sovereign governments on a framework designed by their former rulers, over which they had no say.

As the First World War came to a close, Germany was stripped of its colonial holdings, and the question of who should receive its territory after its defeat was of paramount concern. Instead of treating the colonies as ordinary possessions of the victorious powers and simply transferring them to another European administering power, they were placed under international supervision. The recently established League of Nations asserted that these territories comprised societies that were not yet capable of governing themselves effectively under the circumstances, leading to the establishment of the Mandate System under Article 22. The system placed the territories under the administrative control of the victorious nations. While in theory they were required to promote the social, political, and economic development of the societies they ruled,

the European administering powers still held substantial control, leaving open the question of whether progress towards genuine autonomy was being made.

The Second World War significantly altered the international political environment, making it substantially harder to justify and defend European colonialism. One of the major effects of the war was that many European colonial powers were militarily debilitated, while independence movements across Africa and Asia were strengthened. In 1941, the Atlantic Charter declared principles that concerned the right of peoples to self-determination in government. The Charter did provide the growing anti-colonial movements with influential arguments against external control. The war made it far more difficult for European powers to rebuild and maintain control over colonial empires, which directly led to the principle of self-determination gaining greater prominence in world affairs.

In 1945, the United Nations was created, further changing the approach to colonial territories. The UN, unlike the League of Nations, established responsibilities for the nations administering Non-Self-Governing Territories under Chapter XI of its Charter. Overseeing powers were now expected to promote the political, social, and economic development of the populations under their authority while truly developing self-government. The Trusteeship System was established to provide supervision over designated territories, guiding them towards autonomy and independence. However, the system failed to extend to many territories, leaving them under the direct rule of European powers.

The 1950s saw independence movements that sought to gain influence and change the continent's geopolitical landscape. In 1957, Ghana gained independence from Britain and became an example for other nationalist movements across the globe. The following year,

Guinea chose independence from France rather than joining the proposed French Community, which proved that independence could be pursued in several different paths. The collapse of colonial rule was not peaceful across the continent; the Algerian war between France and the Algerian independence movement and the Mau Mau uprising in Kenya are just two of many examples in which independence emerged violently. It was clear that there was no single model or pattern to independence, which left the international community to confront questions surrounding the pace and method of independence.

By 1960, Africa had undergone a dramatic political transformation: Ghana and Guinea had already declared independence, and territories including Nigeria and Somalia, along with many others formerly administered by France, were nearing or achieving self-determination. This rapid rise of independent African states brought new perspectives to the United Nations while also raising complex questions about political stability, territorial boundaries, and economic independence, to name a few. The colonial system was rapidly changing, while no universal model for independence was accepted, 1960 was a critical moment in determining Africa's political future as the strength of European rule in Africa diminished.

Statement of the Problem:

By 1960, it was clear that European oversight was declining, as nine countries had already gained independence: Egypt, Ethiopia, Libya, Liberia, Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia, Ghana, and, most recently, Guinea. Although there has been a steady increase in the number of emerging independent states since the beginning of the twentieth century, there remain between 30 and 35 African territories under full colonial rule. Since there was no universally accepted framework for emerging states gaining independence and for colonial powers shifting leadership, the continent saw a wide range of paths to full autonomy.

Britain's model was rooted in preparing the colonial holdings for an eventual separate nationhood: domestic autonomy first, with British-trained legislatures, followed by genuine independence after the government had been deemed "sufficient". But sufficient was only a nebulous concept.

France's approach was quite different; for decades, its policy was rooted in assimilation, the idea that the French colonies in Africa were simply extensions of the country itself. Though in 1958, Prime Minister Charles de Gaulle decreed the 1958 referendum, which gave the colonies two choices: join the French Community, keeping close ties with France and being established as autonomous republics, or separate from France completely and gain full independence but lose France's protective oversight. When Guinea's President, Sékou Touré, chose the latter, France removed equipment, records, and personnel almost overnight, setting a precedent for other French territories.

Belgium had invested very little time in preparing its territories for independence; in fact, by 1960, there were only a handful of African university graduates in the entire colony. Facing

riots towards the end of the 1950s and fearing an Algerian-style war, Belgium abruptly granted independence, leaving the Congo without training for civil servants or the army officer corps, almost the opposite extreme from Britain's phase model. From these different strategies, it becomes important to strike a balance between an indefinite, drawn-out approach and short-sighted volatile one.

Portugal took a similar approach to France's earlier policy, believing that its African territories were provinces of Portugal, equivalent to Portuguese territory in Europe. By 1960, the Portuguese government had made no moves. In Angola and Mozambique, nationalist resistance groups were rising against the harsh systems of forced labor and demographic engineering. Portugal argued to the United Nations that its African territories were "overseas provinces," not colonies, thereby placing them under its Constitution. When a nation refuses to begin decolonization, groups vying for independence move from peaceful protests to violent riots and guerrilla warfare. The nation occupying the territory faces severe economic strain and major drafts to fight the emerging state.

While in 1960 the UN was not legally able to determine and enforce how colonial powers should decolonize, nor did it have an independent army to enforce this, it used legal, bureaucratic, and diplomatic mechanisms to pressure resistant empires and ensure that independence movements were granted their freedom. Article 73 of the UN Charter states that the administration occupying African territory must work to advance the political, social, and economic well-being of the colonies, thereby raising the obligation from purely domestic to international. Defined by the UN Charter under Chapter XI, Article 73, a Non-Self-Governing Territory (NSGT) is a territory "whose peoples have not yet attained a full measure of

self-government.” The UN Charter did not explicitly specify which claims in Africa were NSGTs, thereby allowing countries such as Portugal to designate their colonies as “overseas provinces,” bypassing the Charter’s definition of territory.

Colonial powers were required to provide the UN Secretary-General with annual statistical and technical information to help determine whether they were deliberately delaying decolonization. While the UN is unable to force compliance from colonial powers that refuse independence, it can strip a nation of international legitimacy, authorize economic and/or diplomatic isolation, and recognize only groups fighting for independence as the “legitimate representatives” of the oppressed territory. In January of 1960, the General Assembly was in the midst of an anti-colonial movement, as recently independent nations in Africa and Asia were using their votes to shape international legislation decisively, since each country gets one vote and there are no vetoes. Control is slowly shifting away from Western powers, as Cameroon gained independence on Jan 1, 1960. The Trusteeship Council, established under Chapter XII, was to supervise territories placed under UN care following the World Wars. Unlike NSGTs, Trust Territories have a strict mandate by the UN to gravitate towards self-government and independence.

During the Scramble for Africa in the late nineteenth century, European powers partitioned the continent to avoid fighting with one another. Both geographical features, such as rivers and mountain ranges, and geometric lines were used to carve Africa. Economic interests played a major role in determining borders: trading ports and dense natural resource areas were exploited and extremely valuable, rarely divided between two nations. The borders paid no regard to existing African political and cultural divisions. Entire kingdoms and single ethnic

communities were split; the Somali nation was divided among French Somaliland, Italian Somaliland, British Somaliland, Kenya, and Ethiopia. This meant that even rival nations were forced into a single unit, with the extremely diverse northern territories and southern kingdoms being consolidated into Nigeria. Newly sovereign states are now granted autonomy over multi-ethnic groups that share no common identity, leading to immediate internal power struggles. As of January 1960, the world watched the Belgian Congo nervously as rumors of regional secession spread, because extremely different regions had been forcibly bound together during colonial consolidation. African leaders across the continent recognize that if one border is questioned, a precedent will be set, leading to all borders being questioned, ultimately leading to catastrophic warfare. If countries begin to demand border changes, conventional warfare will spark from currently dormant border disputes. If all divisions are granted, the continent, divided into thousands of micro-states, would destroy any hope for self-sufficiency. A country's decision to change its borders could be just as dangerous as keeping them. Newly independent nations must decide for themselves what to do with a political map they inherited, in which they had no say.

Although a country becomes politically independent, that does not necessarily mean that it is economically independent from its former administration. When colonial economies were built, the idea of self-sufficiency was never in question; instead, many European countries saw Africa as a conveyor belt for European industrial centers. European powers made certain territories responsible for a single cash crop or mineral, making their entire economies wholly dependent on its production and export. If the global price of this commodity falls, the entire territory goes bankrupt. Regional trade was fostered not by roads and railways connecting

African tribes and peoples, but rather by coal mines and plantations delivering directly to the coastline to maximize efficiency in exporting to Europe. Once independence is granted, European companies do not collect their resources and leave; instead, they stay and work with the new African leaders to keep their tax-exempt status and extraction privileges. Emerging states have no manufacturing bases within their territories, thereby forcing them to export their resources to Europe for little profit, only to buy back those manufactured goods from European nations. Immediately, new governments face massive demands for schools, hospitals, and infrastructure for their citizens, yet they inherit large amounts of debt. This creates a need for external technical expertise, as years of colonial rule barred native populations from accessing higher education, leading them to hire European doctors, teachers, accountants, and engineers at high cost.

When a colonial administration officially departs, a sovereign nation does not emerge fully formed; the immediate aftermath of independence is an operational power vacuum. The process of transferring authority from a colonial government to a newly sovereign state comes with challenges. In many territories, colonial powers restricted indigenous people from holding senior positions; the new government was forced to operate with a limited pool of experienced officials. This raises the question of whether the colonial power transferring power should remain involved to ensure that vital government functions remain effective and continue, or would their continued presence only undermine the sovereignty and independence of the emerging state. Within the military and security institutions, similar questions arise, as colonial powers had created security forces primarily to maintain control and peace. Whether these workforces could be transferred to national institutions remains unclear. In developing their

security institutions, should emerging states be given these forces or receive assistance from international powers to establish their own defense organizations?

The stakes are not merely whether the new sovereign states will receive a seat at the UN, but whether they will actually maintain their sovereignty and govern themselves effectively once all external assistance has been withdrawn. When administrations are not prepared, economic dependency lingers, foreign powers intervene, and conflicts escalate, the emerging state enters what scholars call a post-colonial structural crisis. When colonial powers leave abruptly without providing local populations with the knowledge needed to run government effectively, fundamental state operations are no longer carried out. As foreign corporate monopolies continue to extract precious resources, the state can no longer generate revenue and is forced to take out massive, high-interest loans from Western banks, thereby permanently trapping it in a cycle of debt. It is evident that the effects of poorly prepared decolonization are not merely a return to the status quo but state failure. If the committee is unable to reach agreement on both the legal and practical aspects of the transition of power among sovereign nations in Africa as of 1960, Western imperial rule is likely to be replaced by continuous economic subjugation, civil war, colonial exploitation, and other catastrophic effects.

An emerging state claiming independence and raising a flag is not the finish line; rather, it is their ability to function effectively independently, a task that requires critical thinking and well-crafted solutions to problems, including questions surrounding administrative capacity, economic dependency, interference by colonial powers, and the escalation of domestic disputes.

What is at stake for the international community is not the survival of a single state, but the credibility of the UN itself. It is less than fifteen years old and has promised to end colonial

rule through legal and diplomatic means rather than prolonged combat. Should this committee be unable to compromise and establish practical norms for the transition, the UN's Article 73 promises and countless other obligations made by the same international order risk appearing impotent, unable to compel ruthless colonial powers such as Portugal to act or to combat the administrative failure currently threatening the Congo. The consequences would not be limited to Africa; they would become apparent across all continents: international agencies such as the UN cannot effectively manage decolonization, and independence movements would likely turn from diplomacy and peace toward violent paths to sovereignty.

Possible Solutions:

Delegates are highly encouraged to research the many issues presented in this guide and arrive to committee prepared to present and debate creative solutions to the intricacies of decolonization. As this is a beginner committee, three general approaches are outlined below to give you a solid foundation for your brainstorming.

The first is the UN taking greater responsibility for supervising the transition from a colonial territory to an independent state. Unlike a gradual process, in which colonial powers provide political, administrative, and security assistance to local governments before withdrawing completely, the UN is not actually governing the territory itself but rather monitoring whether a colonial power is genuinely moving towards self-governance. This could include providing neutral monitoring of administrative and political development, granting emerging nations international access, and making colonial powers more accountable. This plan is faulty because the UN has limited ability to compel colonial powers to cooperate, and it can be seen as one form of outside control merely being replaced by another. It also begs the question of the limits to the UN's authority.

Another solution is international assistance after independence has been declared. This would mean that a newly sovereign state receives technical and economic assistance while remaining politically sovereign. This solution does not require prolonged colonial oversight and would help new governments build critical infrastructure such as schools, hospitals, and government institutions. While this plan removes colonial powers from providing prolonged administrative assistance, questions remain about who should provide this assistance and

whether foreign aid will promote political or economic dependence. Countries providing more assistance than others may expect political concessions in return for their aid.

Both of these approaches answer the same question: how to ensure independence while emerging nations maintain stability and genuine sovereignty. Each solution will have its strengths and weaknesses, as with any problem, so delegates must not only decide which solution is most effective, but also consider how much authority an international community should have over the transition from colonial rule. I recognize that I only gave you two solutions, but remember, these are just to help get you started. There are so many paths you could take on this issue; get creative, and we are ready to hear your intuitive solutions!

Bloc Descriptions:

Delegations are divided into four categories: independent African States, African Territories Under European Administration, European Administering Powers, and International States.

Delegates, especially those representing territories currently under European administration, should represent the political interests and aspirations of the territory they represent as they existed in January 1960

Independent African states will enter the committee with direct experience with self-government and the transfer from colonial rule to sovereignty. Many have a strong desire to expand African self-determination and an interest in preventing emerging states from staying in any form dependent on foreign powers. Their values likely include accelerating decolonization and ensuring territories seeking independence receive assistance from the international community while still obtaining complete control over the process.

European administering powers currently face pressure from the international community to respond to growing independence movements while still protecting their own economic and political interests. They will likely argue that a sudden departure would lead to an unsuccessful transition to independence and risk instability; therefore, they should play a role in that transition. Their goals may include maintaining control over the decolonization process and protecting their existing relationships and interests.

African territories currently under European administration will represent populations affected by the colonial system's failures. While these territories are expected to achieve independence eventually, they may disagree on the method and pace. Their goals include

securing greater political representation and determining how much of their administrative authority to retain during the transition.

Finally, international states having no direct role in decolonization have an interest in the international community's response to the transition. Many can approach these issues through broader principles of sovereignty, self-determination, and non-intervention. Other nations may use their own recent experiences of transitioning from colonial rule. Their goals may include raising the UN's responsibility, defining and establishing terms for decolonization, and preventing conflicts between colonial powers and emerging states.

● Independent African Nations (10)

- Ghana
- Guinea
- Egypt (United Arab Republic)
- Ethiopia
- Liberia
- Libya
- Morocco
- Sudan
- Tunisia
- Cameroon

● European Administering Powers (6)

- United Kingdom
- France
- Belgium
- Portugal
- Spain
- Italy

● African Territories Under European Administration (22)

○ French-administered

- Algeria
- Senegal
- French Sudan
- Ivory Coast
- Niger
- Upper Volta
- Madagascar

○ British-administered

- Nigeria
- Kenya
- Tanganyika
- Northern Rhodesia
- Nyasaland
- Southern Rhodesia
- British Somaliland

○ Portuguese-administered

- Angola
- Mozambique
- Portuguese Guinea

○ Belgian-administered

- Belgian Congo
- Ruanda-Urundi

○ Spanish-administered

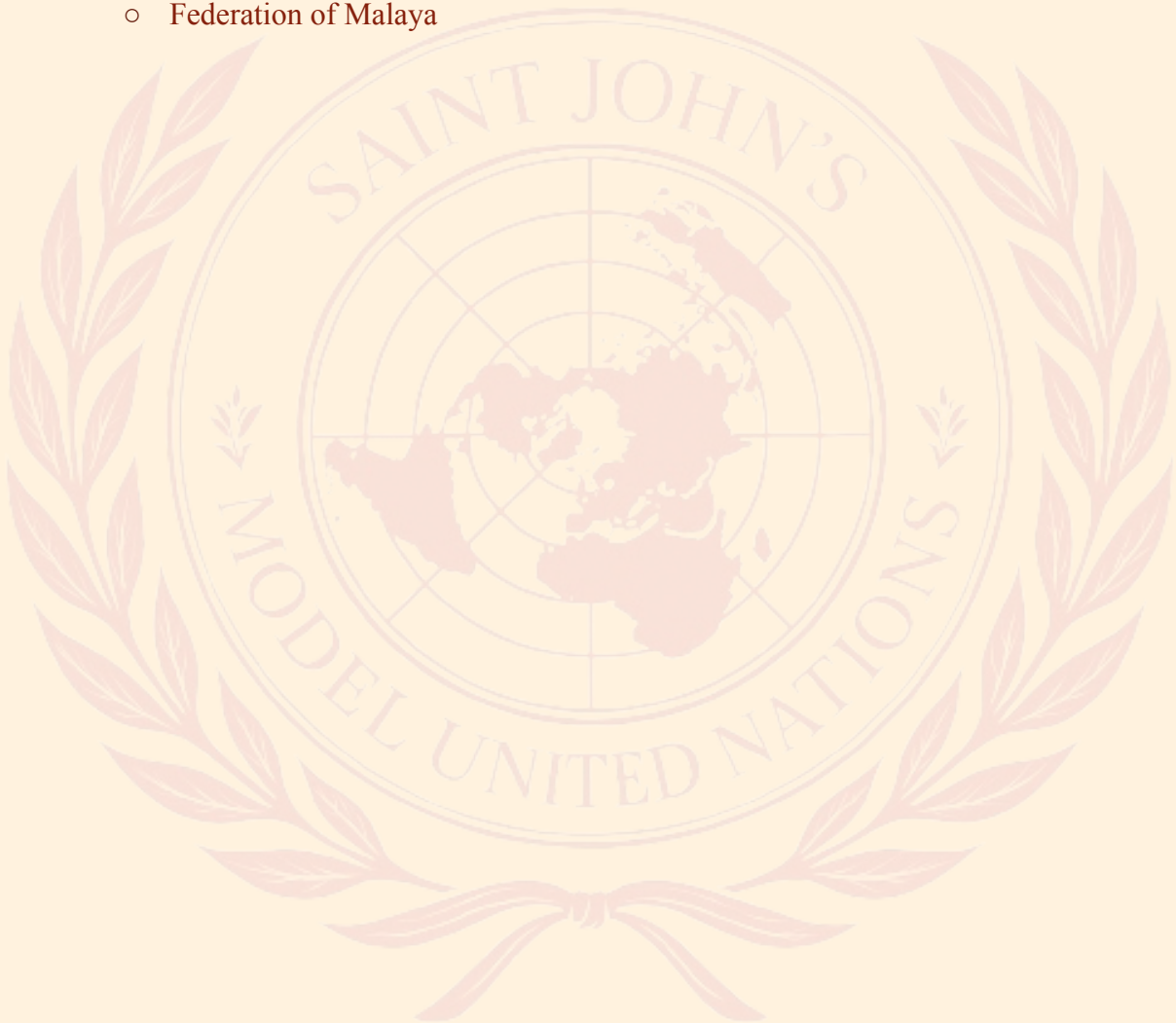
- Spanish Guinea
- Spanish Sahara

○ Italian-administered

- Italian Somaliland

● International States (7)

- India
- Indonesia
- Yugoslavia
- Ireland
- Ceylon
- Burma
- Federation of Malaya



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