

The Fourth Committee: Special Political and Decolonization



Greetings Everyone,

My name is Farah Elherazy and I will be your chair for the Fourth Committee at MASUN XXVII. I am originally from Egypt but I reside here in Fairfax, VA. I am currently a senior at George Mason University and I am majoring in Government and International Politics with a concentration in Political Theory and Law and a minor in Public Health. I plan on attending Law School once I complete my undergrad. I have been doing MUN since my freshman year in high school and I am still pursuing it in college very happily.

The Fourth Committee has always been one of my favorite committees to compete and chair in. It is a committee that has really helped me find my love for MUN. Some of my most memorable conferences that I attended, I chaired the Fourth Committee in. I chaired the Fourth Committee at this very conference last year, and that was truly a spectacular moment because I got to meet many first time delegates, and watch as their passion grew for the Fourth Committee. So I am so thrilled to see each and every one of you debate on the issues presented this year.

My involvement with MUN in college has been amazing. I am going into my fourth year of helping out at MASUN. My freshman year I served as the Undersecretary of Hospitality for MASUN XXIV. My sophomore year I served as the Director General of MASUN XXV. My junior year, I served as the chair of the Fourth Committee at MASUN XXVI. Now going into my senior year, I get to chair all you future leaders of the world in the Fourth Committee. Through the MUN club here at Mason, I was also introduced to Model Arab league, which has grown to be one of my favorite conferences. I competed at both Regionals and Nationals. Last year at Model Arab league at both the regional and national conferences, I served as the Assistant Secretary General. This year at both the Regional and National conferences, I will be serving as the Secretary General at Georgetown University for Model Arab League.

I have chaired MUN at both the high school and collegiate level. I am also involved in numerous other clubs at Mason. I served in various positions within our Student Governments and Student Senate. I have also served in multiple positions within our Off-Campus Council, and this year I am the Vice President. I spent the entire summer this year interning at the District Court of Contract Appeals as a Clerk and Legal Research Assistant. In my free time I enjoy playing basketball and binge watching Grey's Anatomy, Criminal Minds, and How to Get Away with Murder.

I can't wait to meet all of you and I hope you are all excited for this conference, I know I am. We will have a great weekend, and hopefully it will be a great experience for all of you. If you have any questions prior to the conference, please don't hesitate to contact me!

Sincerely,

Farah Elherazy

Chair, SPECPOL

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COMMITTEE SUMMARY

The Fourth Committee of the General Assembly of the United Nations is the Special Political and Decolonization Committee, also known as SPECPOL. This committee was established in 1993. It's the combination of the Decolonization Committee and the Special Political Committee. Unlike other UN committees, SPECPOL shines a spotlight on issues pertaining to occupation, colonization, and subjugation, with the primary goal of making all countries independent and self-sufficient from outside powers. SPECPOL includes all 193 Member States that unite to lessen developing countries' dependencies on former colonizing powers. When the UN was established there were about 750 million people that lived in areas considered colonized territory. Since the inception of the UN, more than eighty former colonies have gained independence with the help of SPECPOL.

SPECPOL's mandate in Chapter XI, "Declaration regarding Non-Self-Governing Territories," of the United Nations Charter, states that the purpose of the Fourth Committee is to commit to the preservation of the rights of people living in territories that are not self-governing. Also according to its mandate, SPECPOL is only allowed to suggest resolutions or plan of actions to the Security Council, as opposed to actually taking military action, which is ultimately decided by the Security Council on whether or not the suggestion can be followed through. In the end, the committee passes resolutions with suggestions on the optimal ways the member states and UN can address the issues of colonized people. SPECPOL's integral goal is to promote economic, educational, political, and social progress as well as the formation of self-government in territories that are not self-governing.

SOURCES

"General Assembly; Resolutions; Commissions." *UN News Center*. UN, n.d. Web.

"The United Nations and Decolonization." *UN News Center*. UN, n.d. Web. "Charter, United Nations, Chapter XI: Declaration regarding Non-Self-Governing Territories." *UN News Center*. UN, n.d. Web.

"United Nations, Main Body, Main Organs, General Assembly." *UN News Center*. UN, n.d. Web.

"Global Issues at the United Nations." *UN News Center*. UN, n.d. Web.

Topic 1: Current Status of Kurdish Sovereignty

HISTORY

The Kurds are considered to be one of the largest populations without an official homeland. With their outstandingly large population of around 22 million people, their land is divided amongst Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Syria, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. Their homeland is commonly known as Kurdistan, but its borders were forcibly divided among the above nations. The majority of the Kurds still reside in Kurdistan, but a huge chunk of them reside in parts of Turkey and Iran. The Kurds have had a long standing struggle with their goal of declaring themselves as an official nation, yet have been unable to achieve independence or recognition as a nation.

During the period between the sixteenth century and the nineteenth century, a large

portion of Kurdistan was under an independent Kurdish principality. This principality established a mixture of a rural and urban society. One of the first major changes that took place was in 1639, when the Ottoman and Persian empires divided Kurdistan. They divided Kurdistan into what is known as the “spheres of influence”.



The border that they agreed upon happened within the same year. The Kurds knew that they wanted to protect their culture and the traditions that they established, so they decided to support either power within the spheres of influence. Within the three following centuries after this agreement, the Kurds faced severe repercussions. Their economy suffered, many of their villages and towns were destroyed, and an influx of massacres forced the Kurds and the Turkish tribes that held establishment within parts of Kurdistan to migrate to neighboring countries. This caused a halt on the growth they desired and forced them to carry out tribal ways of living.

Although the damage on their economy devastated their ability to flourish as an urban and rural society, it allowed them to become conscious of the issues they must learn to extract. In 1597, Sharaf Khan who was the prince of the powerful Bidlis principality compiled the first instance of a collaboration of Kurdish history—Sharafnameh. The historical knowledge that came out of this was one that the Kurds could enjoy because it show-cased their independence, or at least the independence that they strived for. It was split into multiple chapters; for example, the first chapter talked about the royalties that enjoyed their power, while the next discussed those that denied their royalty and instead just wanted to have their names recited in prayers.

In more recent years, the Kurdish people were again ignored when colonial European powers divided the middle east according to the Sykes-Picot agreement, following the collapse of

the Ottoman Empire after World War One. Kurdish separatists in Turkey began a series of terrorist attacks in 1978 as the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK). These attacks occurred on and off over the past few decades and into the present with unsuccessful attempts at mediation for lasting peace. In the 1980s, they became subject to political crackdowns and repression by the Iraqi Baathist government of Saddam Hussein, culminating in what many consider to be a genocide. The UN passed a series of resolutions (including Security Council Resolution 688) condemning the actions of the Iraqi government and instituted no fly bans, but not much was done beyond that.

CURRENT EVENTS

The Kurds are facing a national awakening, because their nationalism developed on its own before they assimilated themselves in various societies. Currently the Kurds struggle with defining their borders and expressing their national identity. They defend their culture, beliefs, and ideologies against three strong regional identities: Arabs, Turks, and Persians. The Kurds have faced various degrees of oppression and have consistently been trying to establish self-sovereignty. PKK activities in Turkey have ramped up in recent years and Peshmerga forces are heavily involved in fighting the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

One of the biggest issues that the Kurds currently face is border security. Because their population is spread across various nations, the overlap of borders causes a security issue. This makes them vulnerable to interference from regional and international powers. The next issue is that many of the regions that the Kurds are spread across consist of some of the poorest and most war-stricken areas that already have increased issues within their own borders. These areas tend to become controlled by external forces that damage the economic independence of the Kurdish regions. The third issue that they face is throughout their trials to assimilate in certain areas, they deal with issues of oppression and resistance. Their desire to establish themselves as a nation with secure borders has caused them to head in a direction away from that goal. The more that the Kurds resist relocation from neighboring countries, the more oppression and displacement they face. The fourth and most integral issue is that the Kurds already have a long history of their culture, traditions, and ideologies, making it very difficult to just assimilate themselves within another nation's borders. Due to their complex history and politics, they strive to establish themselves so that they may maintain their nationality and culture.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. Can the Kurds continue to assimilate themselves between the borders of various nations?
2. What are the complex politics, tradition, and culture antics that define the Kurds?
3. What factors make the Kurds eligible for attaining independence and national sovereignty?
4. What does attaining "independence" look like for the Kurds? What the pros and cons of the Kurds achieving independence?
5. What could be the effects of Kurds being recognized as independent on other stateless national movements such as that of the Palestinians or the Tibetans?

6. Will neighboring countries face any repercussions if the Kurds establish independence?
7. What are the regional and international impacts of neighboring nations on the Kurds' strive for independence?

RESOURCES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29702440>

<http://www.merip.org/mer/mer189/kurdish-experience>

<http://thekurdishproject.org/history-and-culture/kurdish-history/>

WORKS CITED

"The Kurdish Experience | Middle East Research and ..." N.p., n.d. Web. 21 Oct. 2016.

Topic 2: Russian Aggression in the Caucasus region

TOPIC HISTORY

The caucasus region is a transcontinental zone between areas within Europe and areas within Asia. This region has historically been an epicenter for friction and geopolitical issues, mainly due to the fact that it is surrounded by politically influential countries like Russia, Turkey, and Iran. These countries, plus the others in between and abroad, make up a web of complicated and tenuous relationships. Furthermore, this location is one of particular interest to Western powers because of its vast amount of resources, such as oil, natural gas, lead, copper, and gold.



In terms of the various types of allegiances, Georgia is with the West, Armenia is with Russia, and Azerbaijan is with Turkey. These three relationships trigger tension within the Caucasus region, and serve as fragile key components to tactical shifts. Russia remains the strongest power within the Caucasus region. This hierarchy was cemented when Russia defeated Georgia in the August 2008 war. Russia was successful in creating a strong front within the territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia by soliciting a military

presence. Moscow increased the strength of Russia's rise when they were able to expose the West's unwillingness to intervene on behalf of NATO ally.

Although Russia maintains a dominant position within the region, its regional clout has been damaged since Ukraine's uprising in 2014 (also known as the Euromaidan). This rebellion put many tactical strategies in motion; it caused Moscow to provide an abundant amount of military resources to both Crimea and eastern Ukraine. It also led to increased tension between Russia and the West, stemming from increased international political and economic pressure on Russia. The West—primarily the United States—were able to lower oil prices and enforce sanctions on Russia, and these factors weakened Russia's economy significantly. Also happening at the same time, Moscow's involvement within various conflicts in both eastern Ukraine and Syria has made it increasingly difficult for them to dominate any political or military power as they did before.

CURRENT EVENTS

There have been many recent developments on Russia's part within the Caucasus region. There have been shifts specifically focusing on Russia's role. Russian officials have been partaking in many types of negotiations that deal with a range of topics, from natural gas exports to weapon sales, and even political and security ties specifically with Azerbaijan. It is important to note that Russia's position in the Caucasus will be a good tell of its role within any upcoming conflicts in Ukraine and Syria.

Russia keeps around 5,000 troops in Armenia. They do not have any military presence within Azerbaijan, but forces that are loyal to Moscow surround the country from all sides. This allows for Moscow's strategic interests to be kept in mind throughout all decision making processes. Within the Caucasus, throughout the past two years, it has become very clear that Russia's ability to instruct influence has changed immensely. Ever since the EuroMaidan uprising occurred, the association and free trade agreement with the EU was signed and the NATO training center was opened in 2015. Another development that came out of this was Georgia's ability to purchase air defense systems from France, which was significant because they had been under a virtual arms embargo from the West since 2008. Throughout this the West has been able to stay committed and supportive to Russia, at least on paper.

At the same time, Azerbaijan's leverage towards Russia has grown. Europe views Azerbaijan as an alternative source of natural gas through the Southern Corridor route. Azerbaijan has also taken more aggressive stance with its conflict in Armenia over the Nagorno-Karabakh territory. Russia has engaged very minimally with Armenia, but recently they have increased their level of engagement. They have been involved in mediating many negotiations via Armenia. Moscow has also hinted at the strategic plan that would favor Azerbaijan in order to ensure that Baku stay away from the West and Turkey.

Moscow's current position has had many developments within the region. Despite Georgia's strong drift towards the West, Moscow has been able to maintain negotiations and contact with Tbilisi. Under the "Georgian Dream Movement" which is led by Bidzina Ivanishvili, who is a billionaire in Russia, Georgia has showed an immense need to re-establish and strengthen ties with Russia. Trade between Russia and Georgia has grown, and negotiations have led to an increase in Russia's natural gas exports to Georgia. While this relationship is getting stronger, so is Georgia's relationship with Azerbaijan. Georgia has been negotiating with Azerbaijan, which is currently their main supplier for natural gas, and they reached a deal that will allow for the import of 500 million cubic meters of natural gas per year. Due to this recent development, Moscow may no longer be needed to export natural gas to Georgia.

Although Georgia's relationship with Azerbaijan may be steady, Russia's relationship with them is more complicated. The issue is deep rooted in Azerbaijan's failure to pay for a Russian arms shipment in the rise of financial issues due to the low energy prices. Russia has expressed its disappointment and concern for the \$200 million loan made specifically for weapons purchases.

Russia has always favored their military relationship with Armenia over the one with Azerbaijan. Russia keeps its power and influence in both by sending shipments of arms. Russia's efforts in conducting diplomatic talks between both countries has been difficult, due to pressure from surrounding countries. Armenia has become more aware and suspicious of Russia's willingness to participate in diplomatic negotiations on the Nagorno-Karabakh territory with Azerbaijan.

Russia's engagement with the Syrian conflict has raised red flags throughout the region, signalling the usage of this engagement as leverage by other countries within the region such as Ankara. It has also sparked a suspicion that Iran may become involved within the already tense region.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. Could Russia's relationship with both Armenia and Azerbaijan lead to a downfall?
2. Can Russia uphold their influence within the region and remain dominant?
3. What are the immediate and long term implications of Iran's possible engagement within the region?
4. What impacts will the upcoming US Presidential Administration have on its relationship with Russia and position within the Caucasus?

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"The EU-Russian Conflict Enters the Caucasus." Carnegie Europe. N.p., n.d. Web. 12 Jan. 2017.

"Russian Aggression - War in the Caucasus is As Much the Product of an American Imperial Drive as Local Conflicts." Russian Aggression - War in the Caucasus is As Much the Product of an American Imperial Drive as Local Conflicts. N.p., n.d. Web. 12 Jan. 2017.

RESOURCES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

<https://www.stratfor.com/analysis/russias-evolving-role-caucasus>

<http://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/57401>

http://www.bibliotecapleyades.net/sociopolitica/esp_sociopol_nwo33.htm