

SPECIAL POLITICAL AND DECOLONIZATION



Letter to the People:

Honorable Delegates,

Welcome to the 5th annual conference of Douglas Freeman High School. We are pleased to have you in the Special Political and Decolonization Committee with the topics of election fraud and the dependency of developing countries on exports. Your chairs will be Aarush Vallapureddy and Sahasra Kancherlan. Aarush is delighted to be your esteemed chair for the 2024-25 SPECPOL General Assembly. He is a junior attending the Center of Leadership, Government, and Global Economics. This is his second year and Model United Nations, but he also participated in extracurriculars such as TSA and track. Sahasra is a sophomore in her fifth year participating in Model United Nations. She is also in the Leadership Center and is excited to be a chair for this year's iteration of FreeMUN.

During this committee, we will be attempting to find solutions to the international issue of election fraud and exploitation of developing nations' resources. These worldwide issues require urgent care and attention, as they are bending the economy and disrupting the order that is placed in countries, but we encourage you to remember that these are sensitive issues that need to be looked at through a critical but kind eye. Please remember to research your positions well and refrain from inserting any *personal* opinions. We expect to see you representing your country with political accuracy at all times during moderated and unmoderated caucuses. Position papers will be required for delegates to receive awards, which your chairs will choose based on contributions made during the debate as well as position paper quality. We hope that you find the background guide to be helpful, but we also encourage you to research for yourself. If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to email your chairs at specpolfreemunv@gmail.com. Finally, we are so excited to have all of you on our committee and wish you luck with your preparation!

Your Chairs,

Aarush Vallapureddy and Sahasra Kancherla



Douglas S. Freeman High School Model United Nations Conference

Special Political and Decolonization

General Assembly

Topic I: *Election Fairness*

Topic II: *Exploitation of Developing Nations' Resources*

Committee Overview

The Special Political and Decolonization Committee (SPECPOL) is the fourth committee of the General Assembly of the United Nations. This committee is in charge of global security, disarmament, and threats to peace that affect the international community. It addresses general disarmament and international security matters, and countries rely on SPECPOL to maintain international peace and security.

In this general assembly, delegates will debate Topic I, Election Fairness and Topic II, Exploitation of Developing Nations.

Topic I: Election Fairness

Background

Throughout the world, in various elections, different parties often find ways to gain an unfair advantage by manipulating the system in place. The rapid spread of

election fraud has caused major imbalances in political power globally and made it one of the biggest problems of the 21st century.

Electoral manipulation is not a new phenomenon. For example, in the 1800s and 1900s, political parties would attack voters through “cooping,” a scare tactic in which government-hired workers would drug and harass citizens to vote a certain way, or they would force citizens to vote more than once for one candidate. Around the 1880s, multiple world leaders decided to try to fix the voting system by allowing people to verbally state who they wanted to vote for. Shortly after this system was instituted, it was removed because it reduced accuracy in voting and prevented a truly private vote. As time passed, new laws were made worldwide to eliminate such election fraud. Around the mid-20th century, they started using a voting ballot system, where voters are given physical ballots, which protects voter privacy. Despite these laws being set in place, election fraud remains in a modern global political setting and takes on many forms. Strategies for corruption range from direct manipulation to harassment to even

dividing the number of votes unevenly between districts to give one side an advantage.

Current Situation

Election fraud prevents people from expressing their opinions and blocks societal advancement through political means. As voting procedures evolve and modern technologies grow, so do the ways in which election fraud can be committed. For instance, advanced AI can be used to hack into voting systems to create deep fake votes or breach into the voting system to illegally alter the results.

Malicious software including worms, spyware, viruses, Trojan horses, and ransomware is one of the greatest threats to electronic voting, as it can disrupt tallies and electronic records of voting results as well as cause miscounts in scanning.

The Maduro Election Fraud Case, which occurred in June 2024, was a massive scandal in election fairness. In theory, Venezuela is a democracy, meaning the people's vote would directly define the winner. However, during the presidential election of 2024, Maduro committed voter fraud by falsely switching 40% of the votes towards his own party. It is believed that Maduro accomplished this by using fake votes and postponing the release of the ballots through his elitist connections. He bribed politicians into performing election fraud and concealing his corruption. In the ongoing investigation behind this electoral fraud, Maduro has revealed nothing to the media and press. It is estimated that 70% of

the electorate voted for the opposition while only 30% voted for Maduro.

Another example is the 2024 Pakistani general election, where the powerful military establishment rigged the election to prevent Imran Khan's party from maintaining control.

Furthermore, in Russia, Vladimir Putin used severe restrictions on freedom of expression and privacy to intimidate voters into supporting him. Similar scare tactics have been utilized in Belarus, China, and North Korea.

An example of individuals interfering with election fairness is the 2024 South Korean National Assembly elections, in which citizens voted for 300 members in the National Assembly. Spy cameras were placed in hidden locations throughout various polling stations, which violated voters' privacy.

Analysis

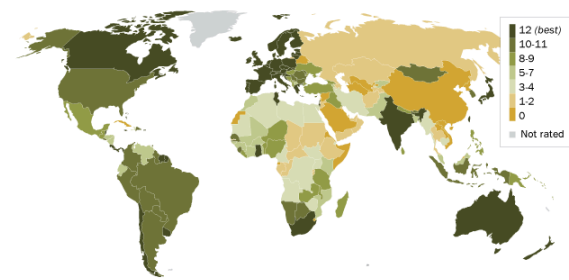
Some reforms have been made to correct loopholes in political systems that lend themselves to corruption.

For example, the Voting Rights Act was passed in 1965 in the U.S. to ensure equal voting rights for all civilians. This act allowed all citizens to vote and prevented discrimination at the ballot box.

Figure II: Map showing countries' rates of fair elections

Where are elections the freest and fairest?

Freedom House ratings of nations' electoral systems, 2016



Source: Freedom House
PEW RESEARCH CENTER

One controversy in election fairness is mail-in ballots. Proponents of these absentee ballots argue that it gives more people access to vote, especially those who have difficulty accessing polling places, either because of time or financial restrictions. Absentee ballots also allow voters to take their time when considering the candidates, possibly leading to more informed voting decisions. Meanwhile, opponents believe that mail-in ballots reduce ballot security; political operatives could intimidate people at their homes or mailed ballots can be stolen. However, most studies have found that such cases of voter fraud are rare. Countries that offer postal voting include Australia, Germany, Italy, Malaysia, Mexico, the Philippines, Singapore, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

Some countries require audits of election systems and outcomes that are conducted by impartial government officials with as much public transparency as possible.

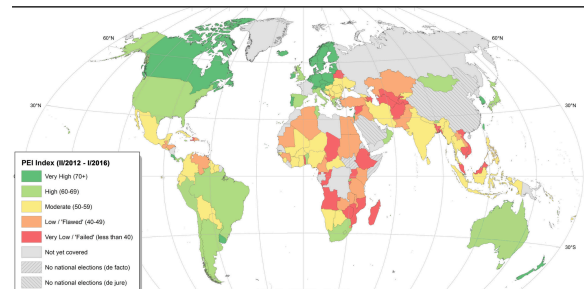
The U.S. has taken some initiative in reducing voter fraud. Most states require backup paper ballots from every voting machine to verify results, though not all.

Nationwide cross checking of voter registration can reduce duplicate votes.

Internet voting, where voters can vote online through email or text, has been used in Australia, Canada, Estonia, Norway and France. This form of voting lends itself to voters who are physically unable to access polling stations. It also makes elections more efficient. However, verification and protection of online votes is much harder than with physical ballots. Several countries have tried internet voting but withdrew after corruption concerns. Notably, this form of voting does not encompass all e-voting, as e-voting machines or kiosks in polling stations are not connected to the internet.

More research is needed to create election systems that are secure for each country, especially with emerging advanced technologies.

Figure III: Map the Perception of Electoral Integrity (PEI) Index around the world



The right to vote for a leader for each country is a sacred matter, as it is a key factor that determines the welfare of a country. Election fraud impacts not only individual countries' futures, but also affects countries worldwide, as many elected

leaders and politicians make decisions with international impacts.

Questions to Consider:

1. Historically, what reforms have been successful and what reforms have been unsuccessful in reducing election fraud?
2. What regulations should SPECPOL impose to prevent election fraud during the voting process?
3. How can SPECPOL help governments keep up with new, advanced technology and AI?
4. How can SPECPOL coordinate with world leaders to implement reforms to prevent election fraud considering many of these leaders are products of political corruption in their own countries?
5. How can SPECPOL balance respect for countries' sovereignty with promotion of worldwide political justice?

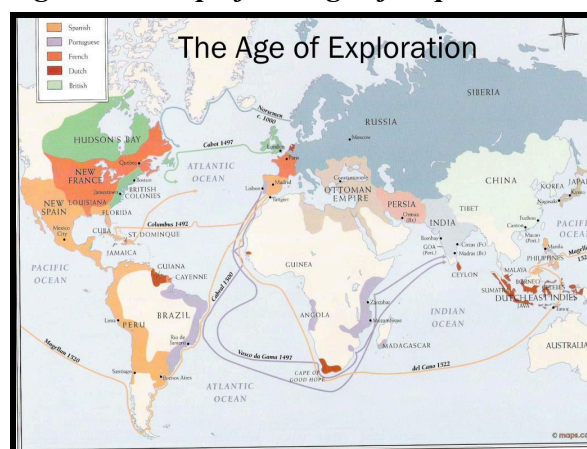
Topic II: Exploitation of Developing Nations' Resources

Background

First-world countries' reliance on developing countries dates back to the beginning of the 15th century during the Age of Discovery when European countries started to discover new lands. For the purposes of this topic, first world countries can be classified as states that are

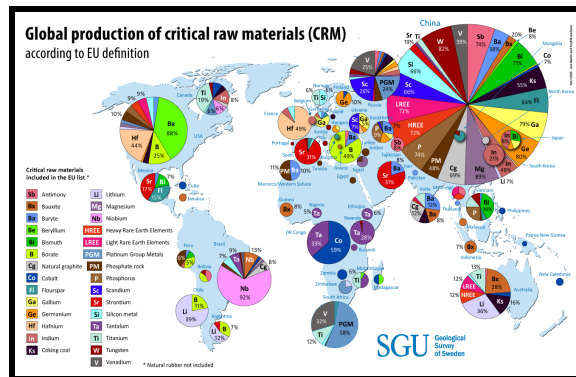
economically developed, have strong industrial bases, and stable political systems. Meanwhile, developing countries often have limited access to healthcare, education, and infrastructure, as well as higher poverty rates. The first world powers began to collect raw materials from the new countries due to the lack of proper resources back home caused by centuries of development and climate issues.

Figure IV: Map of the Age of Exploration



This trend continued during the Industrial Revolution in Europe when the demand for raw materials like cotton and metal increased dramatically due to the fact that factories were mass producing textiles and metal tools. Developing regions such as India, the West Indies, and China became key suppliers of raw materials due to their natural resources and often unethical cheaper labor that came in the form of child labor and forced labor.

Figure V: The global production of raw materials



This has resulted in massive modern-day disparities. Developing countries heavily rely on first-world countries for aid due to the disruption colonization caused to their economies and other infrastructure. Colonization left developing countries with political instability, violence, plagues, and decimated natural resources that prevented them from refining them into sellable goods post-imperialism. Today, while colonial empires are officially over, the power dynamic between developed and developing countries is still very much relevant; rich countries give aid and, in return, get raw materials and natural resources that they do not have access to otherwise.

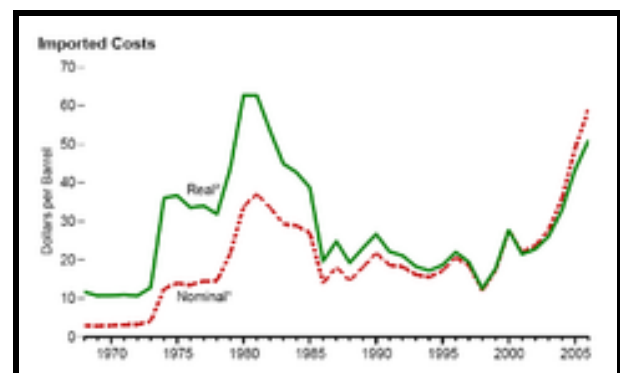
Another example of developing countries' exploitation are the 1898-1934 Banana Wars, where the European Union and the U.S. forced developing countries in South Africa to compete with larger Latin American producers. Essentially, the World Trade Organization ruled against the EU's banana regime, stating that it violated free trade principles and unfairly discriminated against Latin American producers because

the EU preferred their old African colonies due to the colonies giving the EU a better deal. This left African banana producers vulnerable, unable to match the production scale and cost efficiency of their Latin American counterparts. Since then, the term “Banana Republic” has been used to describe a politically and economically unstable country overdependent on natural resource exports.

Developed countries can also be harmed when they are dependent on developing countries for exports, as demonstrated during the 1973 Oil Crisis where the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries called for an oil embargo in response to U.S. support for Israel during the Yom Kippur War. This led to a severe nationwide oil crisis.

Additionally, the coffee crisis in the early 2000s revealed major weaknesses in trade dynamics. A sudden decline in coffee prices caused economic problems in developing countries like Brazil and Columbia that were dependent on coffee exports. This, in turn, impacted developed countries' economies that relied on stable coffee supplies.

Figure III: Graph showcasing the oil crisis of the 1970s



Current Status

In the modern world, developed countries are heavily reliant on developing countries for exports of raw materials, agriculture, and manufactured goods. The first world relies on developing countries for 30% of their energy needs, 98% of their rare earth elements, 70% of key agricultural products, 60% of critical minerals and metals, and 30% of their textiles and apparel. A variety of legislation exists to protect developing countries against exploitation in trade. For example, there are WTO agreements which are designed to guarantee fair trade among countries regardless of power imbalances. Notably, the Fairtrade Certification ensures that producers in developing countries receive fair prices for their products. There is also the EBA initiative which grants duty-free and quota-free access to the EU market for all products (except arms and ammunition) from the Least Developed Countries.

Figure IV: Functions of the WTO



However, the success of these agreements varies depending on how the participating nations and companies enforce and comply with them. The improper enforcement of these laws has allowed numerous humanitarian crises to persist,

including cobalt mining in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and rare earth mineral mining in Myanmar. In both situations, local people are being exploited and are being forced to work in inhumane conditions to supply goods for international exports to first-world countries. Cobalt is a chemical element that is in high demand due to it being a critical component for batteries. Despite this important contribution, the DRC's cobalt mining industry has a history of serious exploitation, which includes the use of child labor and hazardous working conditions.

Figure V: Children mining Cobalt in Congo



Most first-world countries rely on these unethical methods to get the cobalt, yet very little has been done to aid the minor miners and the locals. For example, in Myanmar, rare earth minerals including neodymium, praseodymium, dysprosium, and terbium, are being mined because they are critical components in many high-tech products, including smartphones, electric vehicles, and military equipment. Rare earth mine workers in Myanmar frequently face hazardous and exploitative working

conditions. According to reports, there is a lack of safety gear, unfavorable working conditions, and low pay. Although both China and the United States rely significantly on these minerals for their tech sectors, the exploitation and environmental damage brought on by their extraction have not been addressed by either of them, despite wide media coverage of these abuses. Furthermore, the mining situation concerning rare earth minerals in Myanmar is a major contributing factor to the current refugee crisis. This is due to the fact that profits from illegal rare earth mining in Myanmar often flow to armed ethnic groups, such as the Kachin Independence Army which in turn fuels the conflict between these groups and the Myanmar military. As a result of the conflict, many more people are fleeing to neighboring countries, particularly China, creating a cross-border refugee issue.

Figure VI: Refugees from Myanmar



Analysis

Labor codes are essential in mediating the power imbalances that occur when developed countries outsource labor to developing nations and even more so when the workers that are still in the developing

country are being exploited as well. There is a large disparity between the labor codes of developed countries and the labor codes of developing countries. For example child labor and forced labor are strictly prohibited and heavily regulated in developed countries. But child labor remains a significant issue in many developing countries, particularly in industries like agriculture, mining, and manufacturing like in West Africa. Global organizations like the International Labour Organization (ILO) and various NGOs are working to address these disparities, and are pushing for better working conditions worldwide through international standards. However, enforcement continues to be the key challenge in protecting developing countries. There are also measures from the UN to aid workers and protect their rights such as the creation of the ILO, a specialized UN committee made to protect laborers as well as Global Framework Agreements (GFAs) which are agreements between companies and union federations around the world.

Ideally these measures would protect both the laborers and the countries but in reality they are hard to enforce, especially when the situations are not under government control and are illegal which in most cases they are due to the fact that most of these operations are run by violent militant groups that force people into slave-labor. It also does not help that economic superpowers such as the U.S. and China need materials from Congo and Myanmar to create items of high demand therefore are more tempted to turn a blind

eye. It is important to understand the importance of materials like cobalt and rare earth minerals, as they are key parts to most if not all the modern technology we use today. The importance of these materials is also a large part of the reason why this problem has not been solved because consumers and the global economy as a whole relies on the product. Additionally, it is important to note that much of resource extraction in developed countries is conducted illegally and there have not been any sanctions placed on the materials internationally yet. While sanctions would not fully solve the issue it would bring global attention to it and at least marginally limit the illegal group's ability to make a profit. Individual companies such as Apple, Tesla, and Microsoft claim to have taken voluntary actions to limit their reliance on unethically sourced cobalt. The U.S. has implemented regulations such as Section 1502 of the Dodd-Frank Act, which requires companies to disclose their use of conflict minerals: tin, tantalum, tungsten, and gold.

Questions to Consider:

1. How can the UN maintain trade while also allowing developing countries to progress and develop better infrastructure on their own?
2. While dealing with these issues, the UN has to be mindful of political and

social differences in these countries. How will it contain illegal and abusive resource exploitation without further aggravating the violence in Congo and Myanmar?

3. As stated before, these materials are of high demand and are necessities for large corporations. What plans can the UN make to balance global economic considerations with protection of human rights?
4. Enforcing legislation to protect vulnerable countries can be difficult because each country is so different. What can the UN do while keeping that in mind?
5. How can SPECPOL ensure they respect countries' sovereignty while also promoting fair, just treatment?

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