

Adia Molaei

Question 3: Choose an institution in either the present or the past (for example a political, economic, cultural or legal institution) and discuss how colonialism has influenced its development, and with what consequences.

Discipline: History

Established in 1945 within a colonial world order, the United Nations embedded imperial power hierarchies in the institutional structure of the organization, presenting how the foundation of this powerful platform is rooted in colonialism. However, the period of post-war decolonization transformed the organization into a platform for self-determination and equality, rather than solely focusing on international peace and security. This led to a pivotal shift in the number of member countries. Through the advocacy for self-determination and equality, the United Nations contributed to decolonization, however, the institutional structure which preserves privileges of former empire causes tensions which shape the effectiveness and legitimacy of the United Nations today.

In 1945, the United Nations was established as an organization with the original purpose of preventing future wars and maintaining international peace and security. The United Nations institutional framework was shaped by the USA, USSR and Britain and 51 countries initially signed on board and committed to principles outlined in the charter. During the 1960s, the United Nations became a significant catalyst for decolonization due to advocacy for self-determination of peoples and sovereign equality. By 1970 the United Nations had 127 members, where over 80 were former colonies, causing modifications in the General Assembly of the United Nations, as the assembly operates based on a voting system. The influx of Third World nations altered the balance of power so advocacy for independence was established due to the pressure put on the General Assembly by the new members. This shift dedicated towards self-determination and decolonization significantly contributed towards the management of imperial rule. However, as the United Nations was established mainly through major colonial empires, there is a vital contradiction, where colonial founders hold legal and structural privileges that are embedded in the United Nation system. As a result, even though new members dramatically changed the General Assembly, the Security Council's structure remained unchanged with permanent members that held veto power, therefore, the growth in number of member countries didn't lead to structural equality.

Between 1945 and 1970, over 75 newly independent states joined the United Nations, and this many former colonies, mainly in Africa and Asia, reshaped the General Assembly, which operates based on a voting system. With a large number of new members, the General Assembly became an anti-colonial platform which prioritized anti-racism and economic development and supported liberation movements as well as challenging the apartheid caused by colonialism, therefore, the United Nations shifted into the moral

organization for decolonization. Due to the advocacy for independence, the General Assembly was pushed into the 1960 Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, which judged colonialism to be a violation of fundamental human rights. This is because the economic, social and political exploitation of colonies by major colonial empires contrasted the United Nations' new policies of self-determination and equality. Due to these new policies, the United Nations shifted to a moral platform that maintains peace and protects human rights internationally.

In 1961, with 121 member countries, the Non-Aligned Movement was founded and it is the largest grouping of countries outside of the United Nations, which concentrates on peace promotion, equality and aiding developing nations for their development. The Non-Aligned Movement is a major voting bloc in the United Nations General Assembly and stands up for strengthening the United Nations role in international administration and the United Nations Secretary-General has highlighted the significance of the movement's involvement in tackling international challenges. Although the Non-Aligned Movement has no formal charter and operates through summits, it reinforces the United Nations charter by opposing colonialism and supporting national independence. This organization is useful for the United Nations as it allows newly independent states to turn their numerical advantage into a diplomatic leverage for anti-colonial policies in the General Assembly. As well as the Non-Aligned Movement, the Group of 77, founded in 1964, is the largest intergovernmental organization of developing countries in the United Nations, growing to 134 members. It provides resources for countries to express and promote collective economic interests and enhance negotiating capacity on economic issues within the United Nations system. The Group of 77 is still a consistent force in global diplomacy and often cooperates with China to support equitable and sustainable development policies. These organizations engaged with the United Nations in order to give economic and social support to the newly independent countries in the transition towards democracy.

During 1945 and 1970, there was a dramatic modification of the institution as self-determination of peoples became a legal right and the standard in international law. As well as this, the United Nations actively supported nations facing prejudice and segregation, which is clear when South Africa was suspended from the United Nations in 1974 due to apartheid, even though it was a founding United Nations member. In addition to the suspension, the United Nations actively fought against the apartheid using arms and oil restrictions, and supporting boycotts internationally. When the apartheid came to an end, South Africa positioned its foreign policy with the United Nations interests and joined the African Agenda for peace, security and development. After the apartheid ended, the United Nations engaged with the African National Congress, who were the first organization to appeal to the United Nations for help regarding the treatment of people, for the transition into democracy, which built up to the elections and the removal of all of the sanctions that were previously imposed in combat of the apartheid. This example presents the shifting priorities of the United Nations into not only self-determination, but also the aid given to

newly independent countries for combatting against the long-lasting negative effects of colonialism.

Although the United Nations transformed its principles into self-determination of peoples and sovereign equality, the structural foundation of the United Nation Security Council is heavily rooted in colonialism. In the security council, there are 5 permanent members, who are: China, France, Russia, the UK and the USA, and they are in charge of ensuring security worldwide, and they have the power to impose sanctions and authorize military action. As well as this, the permanent members also hold veto power, where they can give a negative vote and reject a policy, despite international support. The structural inequality embedded in the United Nations demonstrates the colonial word order in which the organization was established in, rather than the shift to self-determination of people and sovereign equality. As a result of the veto power that members of the Security Council hold, the voting system of the General Assembly may be deemed ineffective and illegitimate as one powerful nation can delay or obstruct the self-determination and equality of many people.

Consistent racism and discrimination in former colonial countries show how structural inequalities that are embedded in the United Nations system have permitted colonial legacies to survive, despite the formal principles of self-determination and equality. For example, 17 non-self-governing territories that have not reached self-determination still exist today, causing around 2 million people to continuously live under colonial rule. The United Nations Secretary-General acknowledged how these territories are consequences of deeply rooted procedures of economic exploitation, racism and inequality, revealing how the long-lasting effects of colonial legacies continue to afflict, weaken and oppress people worldwide, despite the United Nations monitoring the territories through the Special Committee on Decolonization. As well as the colonialism that exists in some parts of the world today, the United Nations occasionally fails to intervene in legal and political situations that involve colonialism, therefore, whilst the United Nations heavily advocated for self-determination and sovereign equality, it simultaneously protected the interests of colonial powers through its actions. For example, in the Algerian war, from 1955 to 1961, the United Nations faced difficulty when addressing the conflict because it would oppose anti-colonial internationalism. The lack of intervention or the delaying of action is mainly due to the veto power of the Security Council and the difficulty to define the difference between administration and illegal occupation, which proved to be a challenge for the United Nations.

In the United Nations, there is under-representation of the least developed nations, such as: Sudan, Afghanistan and Haiti, which mirrors the inequality in the power distribution that was established during the colonial era. The Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO), with 44 members, includes representation for the under-represented people who were excluded from the decision-making of the United Nations, and continue to face the remaining effects of economic exploitation and racism. Due to financial constraints and the resistance of the Security Council, the United Nations faces challenges providing sufficient support and representation of members of the UNPO. This under-

representation could also be a cause of the long-lasting effects of colonialism, like the cycles of economic dependency created through economic exploitation, lack of sufficient infrastructure and the lack of respect for traditional cultures and customs.

During its history, the United Nations became a platform for liberation and a catalyst for decolonization, however, it also acted as a container for imperial policies and protected interests of former colonial empires. Through its adoptions of the principles of self-determination and sovereign equality the United Nations became the moral engine for decolonization, as it suppressed the legitimacy of formal colonial empires and established an organization, in which international peace and security was maintained. The General Assembly gave the newly independent countries the opportunity to develop anti-colonial policies due to the voting system used. However, the veto power of the Security Council undermines the concept of equality, as one permanent member holds enough authority to restrict a policy, even if it is popular within the General Assembly. Although the veto power of the Security Council creates inequality, it may be a useful tool for maintaining stability between key members, as they hold the strongest and most advanced militaries, therefore, the prevention of global war is imperative. In addition, due to financial constraints and disagreements from the Security Council, the United Nations may sometimes have a lack of action or a delayed intervention on providing their support, based on the interests of the permanent powers. The lack of intervention in territories with no self-determination is also due to the United Nations' struggle in defining the difference between legitimate administration and illegal occupation. The cycle of economic dependency created by colonialism combined with the persistent discrimination and inequality leads to a lack of development in many former colonies. These severely underdeveloped nations are usually under-represented in the United Nations, despite their desperate need for support, showing the oversight of the United Nations in creating sovereign equality. Non-self-governing territories still remain today, showing the challenges that the United Nations faced whilst trying to enforce self-determinations for all people, which is perhaps because of the weak enforcement power of the United Nations due to institutional and structural inequalities. This shows that the United Nations was successful in transforming the moral legitimacy of colonialism, but the structural hierarchies from which it emerged still remain.

The United Nations emerged within a colonial world filled with imperial empires, therefore the institutional and structural foundation of the organization remains largely unchanged. Despite the colonial ideas rooted in the foundation of the United Nations, it became a vital catalyst for decolonization, transforming its vision to adopt principles of self-determination for all people and sovereign equality. The long-lasting tensions between the contrasting ideas of sovereign equality and central authority are caused by the legacy of a colonial world order which the United Nations helped suppress, but also continues to preserve.

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