Southern China International MUN

Historical: On measures to provide international support for newly independent African countries during decolonization post WWII (1945-1990)

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1. Description of the Issue

1.1. History of the Issue

Colonialism is "the direct and overall domination of one country by another on the basis of state power being in the hands of a foreign power[3]", and also seen as a direct form of **imperialism**. It had two main objectives: political domination and exploiting the colonised country for various resources. Both were disguised as **"the white man's burden"**, the thought that the white man was morally obligated to guide and make decisions for the uncivilised, non-white people and lead them into civilisation[4]. There were 7 countries that were considered European powers at the time; Britain, France, Germany, Belgium, Spain, Portugal, and Italy. Britain was by far the most powerful with 2/3 of Africa colonised under Britain (it increased to 70% after World War II after Germany's colonies were split amongst the victors)[1].

The Scramble for Africa (also known as the Partition of Africa) was a series of invasions, occupations, and colonisation of African territories and the people residing there by European powers between 1876 and 1914. The colonisation of Africa was approved to keep the peace between the European powers, with a decree stating that effective occupation must be had in the territory in order for international recognition could be issued. Conquering Africa was mainly motivated by politics, religion, and the opportunity for economic development (due to the abundance of natural resources)[1].

Prior to the colonisation of Africa, Europe and African middlemen had been trading for centuries. However, once the **industrial revolution** and **industrial capitalism** happened in Europe, Europe demanded (and required) an enormous increase in natural resources from the world in order to maintain production levels. They needed more spices for their food, more manpower for their mines and plantations, more minerals and agricultural resources for their factories. At some point there was the idea to have the Africans work in Africa instead of shipping them to the Americas to work in order to cut out the middleman and maximising profits[3].

Direct control over the African economy and political administration was necessary for a multitude of reasons[3]:

1. Due to rapid **urbanisation** and the popularity of industrial jobs, Europe experienced a decline in agricultural activity. As a result, there was a shortage of food to feed everyone. Total control over Africa was needed for the workers to produce the type of food needed to feed the industrial workers.

2. With the rapid increase in manufactured goods produced by Europe, Europe needed to find more consumers or else their development and progress would have been stunted. Total control over Africa was needed to ensure a consumer market for the various new industries in industrialised Europe.

3. Europe needed total control over Africa in order to restrict their production ability. They needed to restrict Africa to only a primary producer to establish superiority over them.

Colonies were a way for European powers to establish their dominance. They were a huge asset as they aided Europe with international exchange negotiations, balance of power in the world, and were a source of manpower to militaries. King Leopold II of Belgium was the first to see the economic potential in the "dark continent (what Africa used to be known as)" after reading a report about the massive amount of natural resources found there. He secretly sent scouts and negotiators to sign treaties with the chiefs around the Congo River to get enough territory to establish the Congo Free State in 1882. Eventually, he created the International African Association to take over the Congo Basin in 1885 and take control over natural resources such as ivory and rubber[1].

Many would say that colonisation only had negative effects, but that's not the case. Below is a list of positive and negative effects colonisation had on Africa[1].

Positive:
1. Improvements in education
   African people were provided with western education, but their education levels were deliberately kept low in order to establish the superiority of the European colonisers[2].

2. Industrialisation of Africa
   Africa had massive amounts of natural resources, which is why Europe outsourced resources from them to supply their factories. In return, Europe brought over technology and multipurpose machinery that enabled the African people to build up their own small business[1].

3. Infrastructure in Africa
   The Europeans build railroads, sewage systems, mail delivery systems, etc. that has largely disappeared after African nations became independent[1].

4. Modernisation of Africa
   With the Europeans came modern governance and legal systems that shaped how Africa's government and legal system work today. Vaccinations were also spread around, lowering the overall death rate of the continent[1].

Negative:
1. Scarcity of Land and Food
   The Europeans manipulated prices to be very very high. Farms and cattle would be taken by the Europeans and the Africans (a limited amount as their purchasing power was limited according to employment) would have to pay exorbitantly high prices in order to buy them back[1].

2. Scarcity of Natural Resources
   Fairly self-explanatory. The Africans were brutally exploited for natural and labour resources to supply the factories in Europe[5].

3. High Taxes
   Africans were taxed on anything and everything. This included owning dogs, having more than one wife, and paying for each separate hut a wife lived in. Essentially, everything earned had to be payed back as tax to contribute more money[1].

1.2 Recent Development (as of September 30th, 1990)

Decolonisation was started by the **Atlantic Charter,** which passed on August 14th, 1941. One of the clauses contained "the declaration of the rights of peoples to self-determination[2]", which gave African independence activist encouragement to continue with their demands for freedom. However, the colonial powers refused to withdraw from the colonies. After WWII, the colonised people of Africa began protest movements for their freedom from the European colonial powers. The decreased death rates had led to an increased African population, which was a significant driving force in convincing the population to be in

favour of decolonisation[1]. The decolonisation of colonised countries like India and Indonesia influenced the independence movements around Africa[2]. Younger generation leaders who received education in western countries began intense negotiations with the European governments to transfer authority to the Africans and be allowed to run their own independent state[1].

There is no one way road to decolonisation. Every nation has its own story of how it achieved its independence. Some were peaceful and others were through violent protests and revolutions. Some established stable governments and others went through a slew of corrupt rulers, dictators, military juntas or fought civil wars. Some European governments accepted these new nations and formed strong relationships with them, others were against the notion of decolonisation and refused to support the new countries[5].

Independence had its consequences. Decolonisation had led to weak state institutions that were (and some still are) plagued with corruption and political upheavals[2]. This has led to several civil wars within independent nations due to borders, ethics, and political conflicts mainly because when the European powers were dividing Africa, they failed to take into account the local political, geographic, ethnic, and multicultural diversities[1], which when made into independent nations had no geographic, linguistic, ethnic or political unity[5]. Some countries such as Belgium fostered political violence, rebel groups, territorial control and violence against civilians by placing certain groups in higher regard than others[1]. The ongoing civil wars between the Hutus and Tutsis within Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo are notable examples.

Apartheid (the racial superiority of white people over black people) is currently also a common problem in many African independent nations (most notable in the Republic of South Africa). White supremacy still reigns strong even after Britain handed over power to the South African government in 1947. The idea of blacks leading white people in South Africa caused huge controversy among the colonies and instead of developing a system that restored balance to the new nations, a system of governance where white people (15% of the total population) ruled over the blacks once more was developed. Under the whites' leadership, abuse and brutality towards black people have brought inferiority complexes amongst black people even today[1].

The creation of so many new countries (most of them poor) has drastically changed the balance of the United Nations and the global power distribution. In 1946, there were only 35 countries in the United Nations. By 1970, it had increased to 127 nations, with many of the new nations being newly independent former African colonies who had almost nothing in common with one another other than the fact that they were non-white, had developing economies, and were struggling with internal conflicts due to their colonial pasts. To no surprise, they didn't (and still don't) get along with the European countries. Their pasts make them very untrusting of the European way of governing, political ideas, and economic institutions. They have been very vocal about fighting for more independence and that resulted with the UN accepting more resolutions for independence for colonial states and the creation of a new committee specifically for colonialism[5]. Now in 1990, when almost all of Africa has been completely decolonised, African nations are even more eager to free themselves from the remaining shackles of European powers.

"African Nationalism Protests in Africa." *MSOMI BORA Online Education Center*, 28 May 2018, https://www.msomibora.com/2018/05/history-1-form-five-topic-6-influence.html. Accessed 23 Jan. 2022.

1.3 Key Terms

Imperialism
The practice of extending the power of a nation through either the direct conquer territory or the indirect control of politics or economics in other areas.

The "White Man's Burden"
The thought that the white man was morally obligated to guide and make decisions for the uncivilised, non-white people and lead them into civilisation.

Industrial Revolution
The rapid change in the economy from an agrarian and handcraft economy to an industrial one that uses machines to mass manufacture goods.

Industrial Capitalism
A system where trade, industry, and capital are controlled privately and operated in order to gain profits.

Urbanisation
The process of cities growing and higher percentages of the population move to the cities.

Decolonisation
1. Getting rid of colonisation.
2. Freeing a country from being dependent of another country.

Atlantic Charter
A declaration made by President Roosevelt (USA) and Prime Minister Churchill (UK) in 1941 for the peace goals of their governments after World War II. The declaration was supported by many countries and used in determining the purpose of the UN.

Apartheid
The racial superiority of white people over black people.

2. Emphasis of the Discourse

2.1 Stance of intergovernmental organisations

The United Nations:
When the UN was first established in 1945, about 1/3 of the world's population was dependent on colonial powers.The UN's efforts towards decolonisation was from, as stated in Article 1 of the Charter of the United Nations, the principle "of equal rights and self-determination of peoples". The Charter encourages colonial powers ("Members of the United Nations which have or assume responsibilities for the administration of territories whose peoples have not yet attained a full measure of self-government") to recognise that the interests of "the territories dependent on them" are important and agree to promote social, economic, political, and education progress in said territories and report back any progress to the UN[6].

The General Assembly passed the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (also known as the Declaration on Decolonisation) in 1960. Essentially, it was to stop all forms of colonialism and declare that everyone had a right to self-determination[7].

2.2 Stance of developed countries

United States of America

The USA did support national self-determination in most cases, as seen when they granted the Philippines independence in 1946. However, since it had close ties with many of Europes colonial powers, they could not directly tell them to release their colonies. Instead, they encouraged Europe to negotiate their terms with

their overseas colonies.

However, once the Cold War started with the Soviet Union, the US' original support for decolonisation was offset by concern over communist expansion. They became concerned that the Soviet-supported parties in these new nations might come to power and shift the balance of power in the USSR's favour. Therefore, the USA provided aid packages, technical assistance, and military intervention if needed to help these new nations set up governmental systems that supported Western ideals[5].

United Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR)

The USSR wanted to gain the support of the new nations to spread communism. They called it "an intrinsically non-imperialist economic and political ideology." They followed the US' tactic of providing aid packages, technical assistance, and military intervention if needed to help these new nations set up governmental systems that supported communist ideals and join "the communist bloc (also known as the Eastern bloc)[5]." They were successful many times as seen by the many struggles colonised nations faced (e.g. Indonesia, Vietnam, Egypt, Iran, etc.).

United Kingdom (UK)

The decolonisation of Britain's colonies was done out of necessity rather than choice. After two wars (WWI and WWII), Britain was left weak. They were more interested in rebuilding their economic wealth than maintaining their large empire[8] although the African colonies seemed to be the exception. The first reason for their reluctance is that London wanted to take advantage of the African colonies' natural resources in order to recover the UK's economy. The second reason was they were concerned the USSR would take over the colonies and take Britain's place as the leading world power[9]. Eventually, out of necessity, they started the process of decolonisation in the 1960s with The Republic of Zimbabwe being the last to be decolonised in 1980.

Other Past European Colonial Powers (Britain, France, Belgium, Spain, etc.)

Post-war colonial powers were unstable. The war had done severe damage to their economies and they were holding on to their colonies as a way to recover their economies. They also believed that the colonies would become protected markets and continue to provide raw materials for them. In their eyes, the alternate option of decolonising was giving the USA an opportunity to expand their economic sphere. That in itself was unappealing to every European government as it would mean giving up some of their power to the USA[5].

2.3 Stance of Developing Countries

South Africa

South Africa colonised Namibia until March 21st, 1990. They (the white South Africans) had intended to exploit Namibia's mineral rich territory. South African apartheid laws were also applied to Namibia to prevent black Namibians from having any sort of political freedom. In order to maintain the colony, South Africa employed every method in the book from copying British colonial tactics like fortifying villages to cutting off the enemy's oxygen supply and guerrilla warfare[11].

Rwanda

Ethnic conflicts began in Rwanda in the late 1950s while they were under the Belgian administration. The Tutsi had been placed in leadership positions by the colonisers and were much more privileged than the average citizen of Rwanda. They were very much against the decolonisation movement in Africa. The Hutu were the majority population, but were treated worse than the Tutsi. From 1959 to 1961, a social revolution raged on in Rwanda before the Tutsi were overthrown and overpowered by the Hutu[10].

In 1962, Rwanda gained independence. 120,000 people, mostly Tutsi, had taken refuge in neighbouring

countries in order to escape the violent Hutu community. Refugees in Tanzania and Zaire began organising attacks on the Hutu people and government in order to attempt to regain their former positions. These attacks happened consistently and always ended with a large number of Tutsi stayed and more leaving to seek asylum in neighbouring nations. By the end of the 1980s, about 480,000 Rwandans had become refugees. Many called up one their international legal right to be able to return home, but President Juvenal Habyarimana reasoned that Rwanda did not have the capacity to accommodate the large amount of Tutsi refugees[10].

Civil war recently broke out with the formation of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF)[10].

Namibia

Namibia has just recently gained independence. They have just recently been declared independent on March 21st, 1990 after 24 years of rebellion against South Africa[11].

Other Developing Nations

Many other developing nations are in similar situations as the countries above. They have been damaged economically, politically and culturally. Many have fought or are still fighting civil wars due to political insurgencies. They are weakened but at the same time strengthened by their desire for retribution from the Europeans. Internally, their political situations are messy, but externally (in the global eye) these nations are unified in their desire to release remaining colonies from their chains and aid them in recovering their lost identities.

3. Possible Solutions

3.1 In Favour of Developed Countries

Many developed countries would dislike having to be required to financially support developing countries (especially former colonies). This would require them to lose money instead of gain money from the independent African nations. Seeing as many of these countries are practically drowning in debt, having to finance efforts to aid decolonised nations would not be an ideal solution.

Developed countries (mostly the former European powers) are likely to try to come up with a policy that ensues Africa as a main natural resource provider and main consumer to their industries. They would most likely have capital as their main concern as they had lost a large source of income when Africa had been decolonised. As their economies are reliant on a steady flow of consumption it would be beneficial for them to get Africa as a constant consumer of their products. If the former colonial powers are currently with a stable economy, something desirable would be to be able to replicate the world's power dynamic before WWI.

3.2 In Favour of Developing Countries

Many developed countries (especially decolonised nations) would be in favour of having their former oppressors financing international efforts to support former colonised nations. This will mostly be due to the developing nations wanting revenge on their former colonisers in any form possible, but financial is the most viable options for them. Many decolonised nations will be split on how to aid each country, but they will be unified in what they want from developed nations.

Developing countries are likely to propose the forming of an intergovernmental organisation dedicated to aiding African nations to learn how to use their abundance of natural resources. It could be an independent organisation, or it could be a sub-committee of a pre-existing organisation such as the "United Nations Special Committee on Decolonisation". The formation of an organisation all nations would have a part in creating would most likely ensure that all nations also fund the organisation to be made and maintained

(making sure that all developed nations are doing their part and its not just a select few nations funding it). The forming of an organisation focused on aiding newly independent African nations would also let countries to focus on other pressing matters such as population health and education. Africa's overall economy would grow with time and be able to integrate and interact with Western and Asian powers.

4. Keep in Mind the Following

When researching and debating for your country, bear in mind your citizen's opinions, your current governments stance, how the decisions you make during the conference would impact your country, your country's history with the issue, current policies, failed policies and the list of questions below.

1. How will any policies/resolutions passed in the committee impact your country's future?
2. What are the current efforts (both national and international) to solve this issue?
3. How would your government managed to support and promote any decisions made to your country's citizens?
4. Why is your country for/against decolonisation? What are your government's motives for its past decisions?
5. How will your country be able to support any resolutions passed (financially, militarily, etc.)? Is your country in a position to support any resolutions presented?
6. Which countries have similar stances as yours? What would be the best way to combine all of them to create a solution that fits everyone?

5. Evaluation

All delegates should understand that this committee is taking place on September 30th, 1990 to resolve the issue of aiding newly independent African nations. Bear in mind that while there are existing resolutions (e.g. Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples) for this topic, delegates ought to still try to come up with their own solutions while sticking to their country's stance. They should understand the reasons for or against the topic and the future resolutions. They must stick to their stance at all times, regardless of personal opinion, and should have adequate research on their country's position and other countries' opinions. Each delegate should understand how their decisions will affect their government and country in the future.

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