



General Assembly

Special Political and Decolonization Committee (SPECPOL)

Aryan Kanduri and Sriram Panchagnula
Co-Chairs



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Special Political and Decolonization Committee

Letter from the Chairs

Dear Delegates and Sponsors,

Welcome to GSMUN XXVI's 2024 SPECPOL General Assembly Committee. Your chairs, Aryan Kanduri and Sriram Panchagnula, are excited to meet and work with all of you. As delegates in this committee, you are expected to represent your specific countries in the two committee topics presented to you. At the end of the conference, you are to have created resolutions for these issues that would be supported by your fellow delegates. The first topic talks about the dispute of Antarctica and how we can work together to end the dispute and use the continent in a positive way. The second topic talks about the Rohingya refugee crisis and what the international community should do about this. It is up to the delegates to think creatively to present creative solutions to these controversial topics.

Aryan Kanduri, a sophomore at Maggie Walker, is thrilled to be one of your co-chairs for SPECPOL. This is his second year at Maggie Walker, having attended conferences like HIMUNC and ODUMUNC. Outside of MUN, he loves to play chess, play the piano and clarinet, run on the school track team, and travel. He also loves to volunteer at the Healthy Kids Running Series and the Children's Museum. Aryan is forward to meeting and working with all of the delegates, and making this the most thrilling committee!

Sriram is a sophomore at Maggie Walker and is excited to chair for GSMUN XXVI this year! He has been part of MUN for two years but had some prior experiences before then. Previously, Sriram has been part of several conferences, namely William and Mary, and has previously served as a crisis staffer at GSMUN XXV, enjoying his time stirring up and participating in intense debates. He also participates in Robotics and has experience with TSA, math and writing competitions, and basketball. Away from school, you can find Sriram relaxing at home watching movies, reading books, and playing outside. He is excited to be part of such an amazing group and can't wait to see all the wonderful debates next March!

As delegates of this committee, you are expected to be prepared to debate the two topics for this committee and to represent your specific country to find resolutions to these topics. You should use the background guide to start your research, but do not rely on the background guide as your only source of research. Use different sources, and research from the perspective of your country. All delegates will be expected to complete a position paper, simply stating their position on the topics. The paper is to be in Chicago Manual Style (CMS), and is to be in your own words. Plagiarism and unauthorized use of AI will not be tolerated at Maggie Walker and are subject to respective consequences.

An important aspect about our conferences is our determination to make a difference through charity! Make sure to bring money as there will be baked goods, merchandise, and many other exciting things on sale during the conference. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to let us know at gsmunxxvi.specpol@gmail.com. We look forward to meeting and working with everyone at the committee! Best of luck to all of you!

Make sure to turn in your position papers by 5 PM on committee day!

Your Chairs,

Aryan Kanduri
gsmunxxvi.specpol@gmail.com

Sriram Panchagnula

Special Political and Decolonization Committee (SPECPOL)

Committee Overview

Background

The Special Political and Decolonization Committee (SPECPOL) is one of the six main committees of the United Nations General Assembly. It plays a crucial role in addressing a diverse range of global issues related to politics, decolonization, and international security. SPECPOL is responsible for investigating topics that are often contentious and require diplomatic finesse to find mutually agreeable solutions. It serves as a platform for member states to discuss and collaborate on issues such as decolonization, self-determination, human rights, and political stability.¹

Established in 1993, it was originally created as the Fourth Committee of the General Assembly, primarily focusing on decolonization efforts in the aftermath of World War II. Over time, its mandate expanded to encompass a broader spectrum of political and security-related topics. Today, SPECPOL continues to evolve in response to the changing global landscape and the emergence of new political challenges. Its mission remains rooted in promoting international cooperation, peaceful resolution of conflicts, and the advancement of self-determination for colonized peoples.

SPECPOL functions as a vital component of the United Nations, facilitating diplomatic dialogue and negotiation on complex political issues. It is the forum where member states come together to discuss pressing matters that affect global peace and stability. With a rich history and a commitment to addressing diverse topics, SPECPOL remains an essential platform for fostering international cooperation and working towards a more just and equitable world.

Topic I: The Rohingya Crisis

History of the Issue

The Rohingya crisis has unfolded as a tragic tale of violence and discrimination against an ethnic Muslim minority practicing a unique variation of Sunni Islam in Myanmar. The ongoing conflict had led to an unprecedented humanitarian disaster, forcing the Rohingya people to flee their homeland due to extreme violence and denial of basic rights. Despite the Rohingya people's historical presence in the region, the predominantly Buddhist Myanmar government has denied them citizenship and basic rights, labeling them as illegal immigrants from Bangladesh.² The roots of the crisis can be traced back to Myanmar's discriminatory citizenship laws dating as far back as 1948. Subsequent policies, including a 1982 law that stripped the Rohingya people of their citizenship, exacerbated their vulnerability and marginalization.³ Specifically, a military junta in 1962 took power and introduced a new law in 1982 that denied the Rohingya people the right to apply for citizenship. There was a follow up several decades later in 2014, where the Rohingya people had to identify as Bengali in their UN-backed national census. This is mostly a result of threats from Buddhists in Myanmar to boycott the census, but is also due to the government calling the Rohingya people "illegal Bengali migrants."⁴

Such exclusionary government-supported policies deliberately keep certain groups of people from accessing rights, citizenship, or opportunity, and have led to a cycle of persecution, culminating in the violent crackdown of 2017. This has caused approximately 3.5 million Rohingya people to be scattered across the world,

whereas prior to August 2017, the majority, around one million, of the Rohingya population in Myanmar were concentrated in the Rakhine State, making up nearly one-third of the region's total population. Almost 700,000 people—half of which are children—were forced to flee and take refuge in Bangladesh as a result of extreme violence and discrimination, including crimes like reported extrajudicial killings, rape, murder, and arson.⁵

Current Status of the Issue

The Rohingya crisis has not only caused the affected community immense suffering but has also disturbed and destabilized the regional tranquility in southern and southeastern Asia. The area suffers from an increased risk of terrorism as well as great amounts of social unrest. Regardless, many countries and nations are still having a difficult time in finding an adequate response to this pressing issue.⁶ The overcrowding in refugee camps has resulted in poor living conditions, forcing many to struggle for survival. Overcrowded makeshift shelters offer minimal protection from the elements, leaving families vulnerable to harsh weather extremes. For example, Cyclone Mocha, which hit Rakhine in May, wiped out several camps killing around 150 people.⁷ Basic necessities such as clean water, sanitation facilities, and adequate nutrition are severely lacking, exacerbating their already dire circumstances.

Moreover, the healthcare system in these camps is severely deficient. There is an acute shortage of medical facilities, trained personnel, and essential medications. The Rohingya population faces tremendous challenges in accessing healthcare services, leading to untreated illnesses and preventable deaths. The absence of adequate healthcare infrastructure intensifies the already precarious situation these refugees endure daily.

Tragically, rampant diseases run rampant in these overcrowded and unsanitary

conditions. Outbreaks of infectious illnesses like cholera, respiratory infections, and diarrheal diseases spread swiftly due to the lack of proper sanitation and healthcare infrastructure.⁸ This vicious cycle of poverty, inadequate healthcare, and rampant diseases creates an ongoing crisis for the Rohingya population in these camps.

An overuse of firewood from forests used in cooking in camps, combined with a lack of proper ventilation in the refugee camps, have incited a major disturbance in wildlife contributing to the imbalance of biodiversity and frequent landslides.

Furthermore, the crisis has had environmental repercussions, with 3,500 acres of forest land in Bangladesh being burned down due to the heavy concentration of the Rohingya.⁹ Deadly monsoons have added to the woes, causing loss of life and injuries among the Rohingya people.¹⁰ Water has been a pressing matter due to the extreme level of demand for water consumption, decreasing the water preservation capacity and affecting the availability of water for both the Rohingyas and local Myanmar residents. The issue of contamination has also arisen as wastes from latrines have mixed with the drinking water both in the camps and pond water, making surface water unusable.¹¹

Analysis and Solutions

The international community's reaction to the Rohingya crisis has been mixed. Some nations have taken significant steps to helping the Rohingya people, such as Gambia filing a lawsuit accusing Myanmar of genocide.¹² Additionally, the International Islamic Cooperation (ICC) filed an investigation into Myanmar's past actions towards the Rohingya people while also urging Myanmar to take emergency measures to ensure the safety of the Rohingya.¹³

Other nations like the United States, China, Russia, and India have been less proactive, not giving assistance to the Rohingya people. Part of this is due to their complex relationships with their Muslim

populations, as each state perceives minority groups as potential threats to their national unity, consequently suppressing them. This leads to concerns about the internal treatment of Muslim populations within these countries.¹⁴ China and Russia have even openly expressed that they do not want to increase pressure on Myanmar's government as they agree that Myanmar is only trying to restore national stability. Former United States President Barack Obama removed sanctions on Myanmar in 2016 until former United States President Donald Trump reinstated them the following year.¹⁵

The United Nations (UN) sides with the Rohingya people and wants an arms embargo (official ban on the trade of weapons to a particular country or region) and other sanctions to be placed onto Myanmar after they gained knowledge that China, India, and Russia are some of its biggest arms suppliers. In 2018, the UN found enough evidence to declare the crisis a genocide, followed by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ordering Myanmar to take all necessary measures to prevent genocidal acts against the Rohingya people.¹⁶

To address the Rohingya crisis and prevent future outbreaks of violence, a multi-faceted approach is essential. Firstly, the protection and safety of the Rohingya people should be prioritized. A potential way to take a first step in this process is to begin in recovery camps. Camp officials could engage the Rohingya community to improve protection measures including the use of unarmed refugees in night patrols. Officials could also provide safe houses outside of the camps to human rights defenders. Global governments can also provide and facilitate access to higher education for Rohingya refugees through scholarships and online opportunities, expanding livelihood opportunities to the main camps and engaging regional governments toward temporary work opportunities for the Rohingya.¹⁷

Secondly, the international community could come together and potentially even

force Myanmar to stop all anti-Rohingya operations. World leaders could launch investigation teams to document evidence of human rights abuses, holding those responsible accountable. Neighboring countries need to collaborate and pledge support to Myanmar for capturing Rohingya militants, fostering regional cooperation and discussion.

Another critical step toward lasting solutions could be amending the Constitution of Myanmar to recognize stateless people and grant them citizenship status, along with ensuring their religious, legal, social, and economic freedoms.

The Rohingya crisis demands urgent attention from the international community. By addressing the root causes, providing protection and support for refugees, and fostering regional cooperation, it is possible to pave the way for a brighter future for the Rohingya people. A collective effort is needed to ensure that atrocities against the Rohingya community come to an end, and that they are given the opportunity to rebuild their lives with dignity and security. Only then can we hope to prevent such humanitarian disasters in the future and foster a more compassionate and inclusive world.

Questions to Consider

1. How can efforts to document and preserve evidence of human rights abuses be supported, and how can those who were responsible for these abuses be held accountable?
2. What conditions are necessary for the safe repatriation of Rohingya refugees to Myanmar, and what measures can be taken to ensure the protection and rights of returnees upon repatriation?
3. How can efforts be made to ensure the cultural and social reintegration of Rohingya individuals who return to Myanmar, and what strategies might help rebuild trust between communities?

4. How can future outbreaks of violence and persecution against the Rohingya community be prevented?
5. How can neighboring countries collaborate to address the Rohingya crisis collectively, and in what ways can these diplomatic efforts be enhanced to foster regional - maybe even global - cooperation and discussion on this issue?
6. How can responsible media coverage and information dissemination be used to raise awareness and mobilize support for the Rohingya crisis? How can misinformation and propaganda be countered effectively?

1-00108-5: This article explores the use of media in the crisis and its overall influence. This is a good place to research the validity of several aspects of the crisis.

Further Research

1. <https://www.unicef.org/emergencies/rohingya-crisis>: This is a good holistic overview of the issue and a great first step for research.
2. <https://www.unrefugees.org/news/rohingya-refugee-crisis-explained/>: This is a look into a more current status of the issue.
3. <https://www.worldvision.org/refugees-news-stories/rohingya-refugees-bangladesh-facts>: This is a step into looking at the poor living conditions of the Rohingya people, as well as how they have received some aid over the past few years.
4. <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/southasia/2023/09/25/the-rohingya-crisis-challenges-to-achieving-a-sustainable-solution/>: This article shows how attaining solutions may be more challenging as presumed, and offers a good look at the international response to the crisis.
5. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2023/06/durable-solutions-rohingya-crisis-myanmar>: This is a statement by the UN Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights on potential solutions for the crisis.
6. <https://jhumanitarianaction.springeropen.com/articles/10.1186/s41018-02>

Topic II: Dispute and Crisis of Antarctica **History of the Issue**

As of today, seven countries lay claim to the continent of Antarctica. These countries include Argentina, Australia, Chile, France, New Zealand, Norway, and the United Kingdom.¹⁸ While the violence has settled a little, there was greater or more violence a century ago when countries would fight for a part of the continent. This led to the creation of the Antarctic Treaty, which states that disputes for the continent must be put aside. Instead, the continent should be used for peaceful purposes only with the promotion of scientific cooperation and research. Many countries lay claim on Antarctica because of its robust quantities of natural resources. It is home to 70% of Earth's freshwater, and it is likely to have oil on the outer parts of the continent.¹⁹

During the colonial period of Antarctica, nations claimed wedges of the continent. While many countries were taking land, there were countries like the United States, the USSR, and Australia that were exploring the continent without formally asserting land. In the United States of America, the discoverist Richard Byrd's expeditions were disavowed by the U.S. government in 1929. On the Western "Queen Maud Land," Nazi Germany was depositing metal swastikas in the area in 1939. The Queen Maud Land region was held by Norway. There were other countries, notably the United Kingdom and France, that claimed large chunks of land in the Antarctic region.²⁰

Around the early-to-mid twentieth century, there were many conflicts between countries over territory on Antarctica. The United Kingdom, France, Germany, Argentina, Chile, and the United States of America were some of the most involved in maintaining and gaining land on Antarctica. Other countries, like the USSR, showed no interest in claiming land, however they were quick to say that they would not endorse any of the other countries' claims on the

continent, unless they were to participate in the exploration of Antarctica.

An example of a large conflict between two nations is between Britain and Argentina. The British were worried about a "pro-German" Argentine government taking control of the important Drake Passage, connecting both the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, so they decided to take retaliatory measures. The result of this conflict is an increased relationship between Argentina and Chile. Those countries resisted the British warships near their territory by adding more security to their respective claims.

The International Geophysical Year (IGY) was a time period to plan scientific exploration of the Arctic, and mainly, the Antarctic. The IGY was between the years of 1957 and 1958. This proposal was widely supported and would involve the scientific study of the entire Earth, including the Antarctic. Sixty-seven nations were interested in joining the program. This program was created around the time when the Soviets launched the first satellite into space. The members of the IGY made it clear that twelve nations were to conduct fifty explorations on the continent and explore the different means of the continent in a non-political manner. Even so, there were many territories that overlapped with other countries' claimed land, so this resulted in some countries exploring the continent to further their own interests. A renowned historian describes the situation as "Science may be seen as a continuation of politics by other means." As many countries explored the continent for their own political interests instead of science, it ended up becoming the catalyst which would lead to the creation of the Antarctic Treaty in 1959.²¹

Many non-political groups were created to continue scientific research on Antarctica. The most notable was the Special Committee on Antarctic Research, or SCAR. Because of political greed at this time, scientific research on Antarctica dramatically increased in the years following the creation of SCAR. Technological advances from SCAR

facilitated research on, like sonar and seismic waves in Antarctica.²²

Many countries also came to realize that Antarctica houses resources like different minerals and petroleum. As a result, several environmental groups were concerned that extracting these resources would endanger the nature and wildlife on Antarctica. As a result, the Convention on the Regulation of Antarctic Mineral Resource Activities, or CRAMRA, was created. This group manages the development of resources in Antarctica and ensures it does not endanger the continent or the wildlife. The reforms from the Convention on the Regulation of Antarctic Mineral Resource Activities were not covered when the Antarctic Treaty was signed. Eventually, the convention lost popularity and resulted in more agreements being created to overturn the CRAMRA protocol in 1990. This included banning mining activities and other resource activities on Antarctica, like nuclear testing, economic expeditions, and military actions.

The Madrid Protocol, also known as the Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty was created in 1991. The protocol is devoted to keeping Antarctica as a peaceful natural reserve, only for science and the welfare of natural life. The agreement also states that the building of infrastructure on the continent is regulated and subject to the Madrid Protocol. An example of what could be subject to the Madrid Protocol is that there is a rule that humans are not allowed on some areas of the continent and that dogs are not allowed on the continent.

Current Status of the Issue

While more agreements regarding the dispute of Antarctica are being signed, there are many countries who claim more territory and are at the verge of another conflict. Countries like China are building infrastructure on other countries' territories and destabilizing the binding agreements and documents. While countries like Russia and China continue to block protection for

Antarctica, the continent continues to be a peaceful haven dedicated to scientific research and the preservation of the continent and its occupants. Economic greed like oil minings and extraction of other natural resources may be causes for future conflict amongst countries.

As of 2022, unfortunately, there still is no peace on the continent. Tensions are still on the rise, and unfortunately many analyses predict that there might be conflicts on the continent regarding which country owns what part of the continent, or the entire continent. This is detrimental to the wildlife and the natural resources on Antarctica as this continent is home to one of the largest wildlife groups and a lot of sea life. Any violence that impacts the continent could lead to extinction of the wildlife on the continent.

As the continent is starting to prove unstable for many wildlife groups, many countries still rely on old treaties and still try to put their own economic interests over the future of this deteriorating continent. As of 2023, the ice on the Antarctic continent set a new record low of 398,000 square miles since the continent was first being satellite-recorded in 1979. This is terrible news as Antarctica is a haven for scientific research and advancement. However, some countries in part of the Antarctic Treaty are unwilling to surrender their territorial claim on the continent to help protect the continent and the wildlife.

Analysis and Solutions

Antarctica should have been a peaceful continent, but human and country interference have damaged the continent significantly. However, not all hope is lost! Although there were many successful initiatives dedicated to the future of Antarctica, like the Antarctic treaty that was supported by many countries, there is still quite a lot of controversy regarding this document and its restrictions. One consideration is how to properly work together. If there were to be a creation of an

unbiased scientific group that is not 'ruled' or 'bought' by any country, many participating countries would agree it would lead to a new channel of discoveries for the scientific world and the general public based on prior advancements. As there are countries actively claiming parts of Antarctica, it could be beneficial if those countries surrender their respective claims and allow their territories to be watched by an unbiased group sponsored by all participating nations in the Antarctic Treaty and the Madrid Protocol. To allow for further exploration on Antarctica, many notable figures introduced the idea to regulate the Antarctic Treaty and the Madrid Protocol to allow for further exploration deep into the continent. Whatever these countries do to try to end the great Antarctic dispute, it is extremely important that the world can let the natural reserves and wildlife be just as it is and make sure that no harm comes toward the wildlife.

As the continent continues to deteriorate in size and landmass, wildlife and all abundant natural resources present on the continent are also deteriorating as well as the continent. In the year of 2023, there are many solutions that might come up as a result of current developments. Some members of the Antarctic Treaty might choose to combat climate change in Antarctica, while some other nations might decide to place economic growth and prosperity as a priority. Many countries might choose this route as Antarctica is home to a large abundance of resources like methane and carbon. Other countries might want to add shipping routes through the Antarctic region, as the region is getting warmer.

Questions to Consider

1. How did the Antarctic Treaty help regulate exploration on Antarctica, and would it be beneficial to amend the treaty to allow for further exploration on the continent?
2. How can participating countries and signatories contribute to continue to

work together and, ultimately, protect the nature and wildlife on the continent and advance scientific research?

3. How can future conflict for Antarctica be prevented by allowing countries to work together to achieve bilateral solutions for the benefit of countries and Antarctica?
4. What can individual countries do to promote higher international cooperation and create obligations that every country must help to preserve and use Antarctica for scientific purposes and not political interests?

Further Research

1. <https://www.bas.ac.uk/about/antarctica/the-antarctic-treaty/>: This is a brief explanation of what the Antarctic Treaty is.
2. <https://scholarship.law.cornell.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1163&context=cilj>: This is an in-depth explanation about the territorial claims and gives some insight to possible solutions.
3. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Antarctica/National-rivalries-and-claims>: This is a history of the Antarctica dispute and crisis. It talks about the politics involved with this crisis and also some environmental issues.
4. <https://www.state.gov/key-topics-office-of-ocean-and-polar-affairs/antarctica/>: This is a source by the U.S. Department of State and gives another generic explanation of the Antarctic Region and crisis.
5. <https://atlas-report.com/the-geopolitics-of-antarctica-and-the-potential-for-a-future-armed-conflict-on-the-continent/>: This is a relatively new source that talks about the politics of the Antarctic Dispute and provides some insight about a potential conflict in the near future.

Endnotes

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https://www.burmalibrary.org/sites/burmalibrary.org/files/obl/docs/UNION_CITIZENSHIP_ACT-1948.htm.
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8. "Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh: Limiting the Damage of a Protracted Crisis."
9. "Rohingya Refugee Crisis Explained."
10. Kuronuma, "Rohingya Crisis Raises Risks of Terrorism and Social Unrest."
11. al Sajib, Sadat. "Rohingya Influx and Socio-Environmental Crisis in Southeastern Bangladesh - S. M. Sadat al Sajib, S. A. M. Ziaul Islam, Muhammad Kazim Nur Sohad, 2022." *The International Journal of Community and Social Development*.
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12. "Developments in Gambia's Case against Myanmar at the International Court of Justice." *Human Rights Watch*. February 14, 2022.
<https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/02/14/developments-gambias-case-against-myanmar-international-court-justice>.
13. Albert, Eleanor, and Lindsay Maizland. "What Forces Are Fueling Myanmar's Rohingya Crisis?" *Council on Foreign Relations*. January 23, 2020.
<https://www.cfr.org/background/rohingya-crisis>.

14. Das, Shuva. "The Ineffective International Response to the Rohingya Crisis — a Paradox." *OxPol*. March 27, 2020. <https://blog.politics.ox.ac.uk/the-ineffective-international-response-to-the-rohingya-crisis-%E2%94%80-a-paradox>.
15. "What Forces Are Fueling Myanmar's Rohingya Crisis?"
16. "The Ineffective International Response to the Rohingya Crisis — a Paradox."
17. "Hope amid Despair: Finding Solutions for Rohingya in Bangladesh." n.d. *Refugees International*. <https://www.refugeesinternational.org/reports-briefs/hope-amid-despair-finding-solutions-for-rohingya-in-bangladesh/#:~:text=Improve%20protection%20of%20Rohingya%20in>.
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19. Ibid.
20. "Antarctica - National Rivalries and Claims." n.d. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Antarctica/National-rivalries-and-claims>.
21. "Territorial Claims in Antarctica: A Modern Way to Deal with an Old Problem Benedetto Conforti." n.d. *Cornell International Law Journal*. <https://scholarship.law.cornell.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1163&context=cilj>.
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