

Forum: Special, Political and Decolonization Committee

Issue: The issue of the independence of Indigenous populations in Oceania

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Personal Introduction

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the 8th annual session of the American College of Greece Model United Nations! My name is Vasiliki Lentoudi, and I have the utmost honour to serve as a Co-Chair in the Special, Political and Decolonization Committee (GA4) this year's ACGMUN conference. I am 15 years old and I attend the Deutsche Schule Athen. I have been participating in MUN conferences for 3 years, and I must admit that each and every single one of them has undoubtedly been a unique experience for me.

First and foremost, I would like to congratulate all delegates for making their way into the amazing world of MUN, which will provide you with extraordinary experiences, a large number of strong friendships and great political and general knowledge of current affairs and issues that affect humanity and our society globally. Having participated in a variety of conferences, I can assure you that MUN does not only contribute to the academic future of an individual, but it may also affect the evolution of one's personality and character.

If this is your first time participating in an MUN conference, I would like to first of all greet you all to this large MUN community and encourage you to participate as much as you can. I can assure you that, in the GA4 committee, you will feel the most welcomed. In this study guide, I aim to concentrate on the second topic, of this year's ACGMUN conference, namely "The issue of the independence of Indigenous populations in Oceania". I am going to try my best to provide you with as much information as possible. In addition to that, I encourage you all to conduct research aside from this guide and learn about your countries' policy so that you can participate well during the debate and procedure of the conference.

For further information or questions that may appear while reading the study guide, feel free to contact me via email at lentoudi.vasiliki@gmail.com. I am looking forward to the 8th ACGMUN conference and meeting you all!

Topic Introduction

The independence and achievement of self-determination in Oceania is one of the most multifaceted issues, as far as the historical background of colonialism is concerned, rooted in the historical background of colonization, cultural erosion and even systematic marginalization. Oceania was a region that was for thousands of years home for a variety of Indigenous populations and communities. These communities could be divided into bigger groups which are: Melanesia, Polynesia, Micronesia, and some other Pacific Nations. Each and every one of them had its own identity, namely different language, culture, traditions and even administrative and political system. However, the whole has been subjected to external control by strong colonial powers, like Britain, France, Germany, Japan and the United States of America (USA).

Colonialism deeply affected the region on a social, political and economical level, while it had a really strong negative impact on the cultural preservation of the indigenous populations. In the past, the efforts made by colonial powers with the aim to integrate Indigenous communities with the European lifestyle and European norms were really harmful and negative for their unique cultures. However, the most important consequence is the fact that the majority of these nations and populations are still dependent on colonial powers and are controlled by them. This is the main reason why there has been a lot of movement in the past hundreds years to achieve self-determination, statehood and gain sovereignty as well as land rights. Indigenous independence in Oceania does not only include political sovereignty but also encompasses the right to manage lands, natural resources, and cultural practices without external interference by any colonizer.

Although some of the nation have already gained sovereignty, the majority of Indigenous communities are still being governed by colonial powers. The issue requires a multifaceted approach so that it can be ensured that all these aboriginal communities and Indigenous populations gain respect, rights and most importantly achieve self- determination. Bearing in mind all these vital aspects, it is safe to say that the conference theme namely, “Balancing Infinite Opportunities” has an immediate connection with this one. For this topic, it is crucial to outline the need to balance international economic, political and cultural opportunities with the preservation of Indigenous rights and autonomy.

Definition of Key Terms

Indigenous People

“Indigenous Peoples are distinct social and cultural groups that share collective ancestral ties to the lands and natural resources where they live, occupy or from which they have been displaced.”¹

Self-Determination

The term self-determination stands for the process by which an individual, a county or a nation determines each own statehood, political status and has the right to form each own government or when speaking for an individual its own life. ²

Decolonization

The term decolonisation stands for the action or process of a state withdrawing from a former colony, leaving it independent from any other colonial powers. ³

Sovereignty

The term sovereignty stands for the authority of a state or a country to govern itself or another state. Also it means the possession of absolute authority within a bounded territorial space, while it stands for the right that Nations have to take important decisions on themselves, without outside interference. ⁴

Cultural Preservation

“Cultural preservation is the maintenance and protection of both tangible things like statues and artifacts, and intangible things, like oral traditions, languages, and religion.”⁵

¹ World Bank. “Indigenous Peoples.” *World Bank*, 6 Apr. 2023, www.worldbank.org/en/topic/indigenouspeoples.

² Cherry, Kendra. “Self-Determination Theory and Motivation.” *Verywell Mind*, 18 July 2022, www.verywellmind.com/what-is-self-determination-theory-2795387.

³ Britannica. “Decolonization.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 18 Jan. 2023, www.britannica.com/topic/decolonization.

⁴ Eric Brahm. “Sovereignty.” *Beyond Intractability*, 29 June 2016, www.beyondintractability.org/essay/sovereignty.

⁵ Bucher, Jeremy, et al.

Colonial powers

“Colonial Power is defined as the social, political, economic, and epistemic dominance exerted by Western Europe over territories and peoples since the colonial encounter, shaping modernity and global structures of power.”⁶

Hybrid Courts

Hybrid Courts are defined as courts of mixed composition and jurisdiction, encompassing both national and international aspects usually operating within the jurisdiction where the crimes occurred.⁷

Land rights

“Indigenous land rights are the rights of Indigenous peoples to land and natural resources therein, either individually or collectively, mostly in colonised countries.”⁸

Aboriginals

The term Aboriginal stands for relating to or being a member of any of the peoples who are the earliest known inhabitants of a place, or one of their descendants.⁹

Background Information

Historical Context

Pre-Colonial Societies

Before European colonization, Oceania hosted a variety of Indigenous communities and societies. Each and every one of them had its own unique culture, social structure, governance system as well as relationships with other nearby Asian regions. These so-called “pre-colonial societies” spread across the vast Pacific Ocean and thrived for many thousands of years. As far as cultural and linguistic diversity is concerned, the indigenous populations in Oceania, namely the Polynesians, Micronesians and Malenesians developed a variety of rich cultures based on their unique environments. Because of that, each society was organized in various and different ways. In Polynesia, which covers the largest part of the Pacific ocean, many societies had highly stratified hierarchies, which were led by chiefs. In

⁶ “Colonial Power - an Overview | ScienceDirect Topics.” www.sciencedirect.com , www.sciencedirect.com/topics/social-sciences/colonial-power.

⁷ *RULE-OF-LAW TOOLS for POST-CONFLICT STATES Maximizing the Legacy of Hybrid Courts.*

⁸ Wikipedia Contributors. “Indigenous Land Rights.” *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 24 Mar. 2019, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indigenous_land_rights.

⁹ “Aboriginal.” *Dictionary.com*, www.dictionary.com/browse/aboriginal.

Melanesia, governance was most of the times decentralized, while the leadership was based on personal achievements like wisdom or bravery.

In Micronesia, the societies were often organized into matrilineal clans with land and status passed through female governance which helped determine the vital role of women in these societies.¹⁰ One very common thread across Oceania was the emphasis on communal living and the collective over the individual. Large families supported each other ensuring the welfare of all members through shared resources and responsibilities. Furthermore, the land and the environment were extremely important for these Indigenous populations. They had profound spiritual and practical relationships with their environments, holding them not only as resources but also as sacred entities, which should be highly respected. Unlike many disbelievers, pre-colonial Oceanic societies were far from being isolated. They communicated and socialized with other nearby mostly Asian territories through trade. They shared goods, ideas and even technologies. The trade was mostly based on shell jewelry and pottery. Even though most of the pre-colonial societies' characteristics are no longer to be found. The history of Indigenous people is extremely important to understand their unique cultural heritage and the negative impact colonization has had on them. Leaders from these societies and representatives fight for their right to self-determination, as they do not wish to completely lose their identity, culture and language.¹¹

Colonial Era

The Colonial Era in the Pacific ocean was a period of time that determined the current social, political and economical situation of indigenous populations. It was an era of profound transformation and disruption for such populations in these regions. It began in the late 18th century with European exploration and intensified during the 19th and the early 20th centuries. In this period, strong colonial powers namely, Britain, France, Germany, the USA and Japan, gained rights in these regions and started to control the majority of the Pacific Islands. This specific period reshaped the region's cultural and social landscapes, often to the detriment of the Indigenous populations that used to inhabit there. It all began when famous explorers, including James Cook and Ferdinand Magellan, first mapped the Pacific ocean and thus opened it to colonization. Britain claimed regions like Australia, New Zealand and Fiji, while France took over Tahiti, New Caledonia and French Polynesia. Spain established control over the Philippines and Guam and the USA annexed Hawaii and other Micronesian Islands. At the same time,

¹⁰ "First People in Oceania and the Pacific." *Sea Life, Islands and Oceania — Facts and Details*, ioa.factsanddetails.com/article/entry-515.html.

¹¹ Taylor, Ian. "2. Pre-Colonial Political Systems and Colonialism." *African Politics: A Very Short Introduction*, 27 Sept. 2018, pp. 11–24, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrade/9780198806578.003.0002>.

and a little after these events, Germany and Japan administered parts of Melanesia and Micronesia. These actions disrupted traditional networks for hundreds of years. Each colonial power established a different administrative system in every region. “Britain established crown colony governments with governors, who represented the king, an executive council of senior officials, and, occasionally, a legislative council to advise the governor”¹², while consistently making efforts towards the integration of Indigenous communities. In Fiji, the Governor Arthur Gordon made use of chiefs and placed them in important positions in the administrative system who later divided the island into traditional provinces and districts. Even in Melanesia, where traditional chieftainship was less common, the British colonizers appointed influential figures as chiefs or village constables.

Germany initially relied on commercial companies, such as the German New Guinea Company to control its territories. Only when this strategy failed, namely in 1899, did the German government assume responsibility. In Western Samoa (now Samoa), in the first decade of the 20th century, the governor Wilhelm Solf tried to limit Chinese immigration for the plantations and tried to increase Samoan interest for the government, but the commercial interests exerted influence in Germany itself and forced the governor to revise his policies.¹³ Furthermore, for the French colonial power, the colonial rule meant assimilation to French institutions, as it also stated in the former site of Britannica. The French government pursued assimilation, governing territories through a special system that was modeled on the French administrative structures. Like other colonial powers, governors ruled by decree with minimal if not none local input. Lastly, the United States implemented in their territories like Hawaii and American Samoa centralized governance. Colonial powers also often adapted to already existing Indigenous systems, a very strategic action, since that way it would be faster and easier for the Indigenous populations to integrate with the colonial powers.¹⁴

Impacts of colonization

Cultural impacts

The colonization of Oceania led to a variety of social, political, cultural and economic impacts on Indigenous populations that had a huge negative effect on the evolution of the indigenous communities and their societies. The consequences of colonization were and are to be found in the whole region of Oceania, since European and other colonial powers imposed their own systems of governance, economy

¹² “Pacific Islands - Colonial Rule.” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, www.britannica.com/place/Pacific-Islands/Colonial-rule.

¹³ *ibid*

¹⁴ New. “Colonial Control in the Pacific.” *Govt.nz*, 2024, teara.govt.nz/en/interactive/36846/colonial-control-in-the-pacific, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/interactive/36846/colonial-control-in-the-pacific>.

and culture, while they made indigenous populations to adopt their own way of life and forget about their traditions and culture through violent means.

Thus, colonization deeply suppressed Indigenous cultures. The colonial powers marginalized traditional languages, spiritual practices and customs, while they promoted European norms as well as Christianity. Missionaries played a vital role in replacing religions and most of the times they underestimated traditional practices and religions. As a result a lot of indigenous communities entirely lost their identity, seeing as it was strictly prohibited for them to pass their culture and traditions as well as language to the next generations. Only a few communities managed to maintain their aboriginal identity, while other population's traditions and culture completely faded under the dominance of Western education as well as societal structures.¹⁵

Social impacts

As far as the social impacts for the indigenous communities go, it is a matter of utmost importance to mention that the arrival of colonizers brought devastating diseases such as measles and smallpox, to which Indigenous communities weren't immune. This incident led to epidemics that lasted years. In addition to that, Indigenous women experienced violence and forced labor, acts that together with displacement caused severe population declines.

Colonization also fragmented communities, since Indigenous peoples were forced to relocate and were removed from their ancestral lands so that colonizers could have enough space for plantations and housing. Furthermore the racism levels in these regions increased and the Indigenous populations were automatically placed in the lower social class.

Political and economic impacts

Regarding the political consequences, colonization stripped the sovereignty of Indigenous peoples and replaced traditional governance systems with European structures and administrative systems. Seeing as so, the political impacts of this issue can be divided into the domestic and regional ones. Domestically, the colonization had led to governance restructuring, legal forms and strengthened Indigenous political movements as seen in multiple cases. On a national level, unity has been challenged not only between the Nations that exist in the region of Oceania but also between the colonizers.

¹⁵ Stanford Medicine. "Historical Background: Colonization of Pacific Islands." *Geriatrics*, 18 Mar. 2014, geriatrics.stanford.edu/ethnomed/hawaiian_pacific_islander/fund/historical_background/pi_colonization.html.

One of the main political impacts that colonization resulted in this region has been the loss of sovereignty. Many Indigenous nations and populations in places like Fiji, Papua New Guinea or the Solomon Islands were subjected to new foreign rules that completely changed and reformed their political system. The majority of the political impacts and especially the loss of sovereignty have taken place due to the strategic importance and geopolitical interest of colonizers for the region. A majority of colonizers like the USA or France still maintain military bases in land and places that originally belonged to Indigenous populations, which has made it more difficult for them to gain sovereignty. Since this has influenced the situation in this region extremely, it is a matter of great importance to completely explain and understand what have been the results from the loss of sovereignty of these nations and populations. To begin with, sovereignty for a Nation is strongly associated with the right it has to govern itself completely and thus determine its own political, social and economical future. This also goes under the term of self-determination, a key component to sovereignty. The nations that have been colonized do not have this really important right. Thus they can not establish new laws or create policies that actively reflect their values and culture. Sovereignty also stands for the control of the land and natural resources of a nation. After strong colonizers reached the region, they took control of the land as well as made use of its natural resources without even coming to agreements with each Indigenous population or Nation first.

Moreover, the economical systems of Oceania were immediately transformed, so that they could successfully serve colonial interests. The economic system of the Indigenous population which was based on fishing, agriculture and trade got rapidly replaced with plantation, so that colonial powers could export them. The rich natural resources got confiscated and utilized for the economical needs of colonizers.¹⁶

Efforts to protect Indigenous cultural heritage and achieve self-determination

Throughout the years, a variety of efforts have been made to protect the aboriginal's culture as well as provide them assistance to achieve self-determination and gain their rights. Some of the first attempts that were made to preserve their cultural heritage was the USA's Antiquities Act of 1906,¹⁷ which focused on the protection of archaeological sites. However, it failed to take into account the cultural and spiritual importance of such archaeological sites. In 1992, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) was adopted, which outlined the role of Indigenous traditional knowledge in terms of biodiversity

¹⁶ Rosen, Charlotte. "The Pacific Islands: United by Ocean, Divided by Colonialism." Public Books, 9 Apr. 2024, www.publicbooks.org/the-pacific-islands-united-by-ocean-divided-by-colonialism/.

¹⁷ National Park Service. "Antiquities Act of 1906 - Archeology (U.S. National Park Service)." www.nps.gov, 30 Mar. 2023, www.nps.gov/subjects/archeology/antiquities-act.htm.

preservation, while it encouraged equitable beneficial sharing with Indigenous communities. After some years, in 2003, UNESCO established a convention for the safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage.¹⁸ This specific convention addressed the preservation of traditions, languages, and practices essential to Indigenous identity. The first legal document that got established was the Noumea Accord in 1998¹⁹, that was an agreement between France and New Caledonia. It called for the establishment of a framework that would promote autonomy and a potential referendum on independence. Although the majority of nations in Oceania remain under the control of colonial powers, there are some, especially the ones who were colonized by Britain that have gained full independence. These are Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Kiribati, Tuvalu, Nauru, Marshall Islands and Palau. Except for the Marshall Islands and Palau, all other Nations belonged to Britain. This is due to Britain's colonization of the majority of the Nations in Oceania because of its advanced naval power. When World War 1 and World War 2 began, this massive colonial power could no longer support these nations politically and economically. As a result, it was the first colonial power to grant the independence of most of its nations.

Challenges to independence

It is a fact that the majority of nations are still deeply affected by the colonial era and the consequences of colonialism. There are a variety of challenges that Indigenous populations face in terms of becoming independent and achieving self-determination. To begin with, the economic systems that got established during colonial rule emphasized resource extraction and exports-oriented economies. Thus, many Pacific nations still depend on former colonial powers.

Another important aspect is the geopolitical interests that colonial powers have for the Islands of Oceania. Their strategic location attracts many nations such as the USA and France, that maintain military bases in the region. This limits sovereignty and exerts important influence over domestic policies. In addition, the colonial powers prioritize their interests over the importance of Indigenous autonomy. An example of this is the case between New Caledonia and France, which delayed referendums on full independence. France managed to do so through a variety of political and demographic strategies. Specifically, after it had already agreed on the gradual decolonization process for New Caledonia and had allowed up to three independence referendums, France retained control over the referendum process, which actually led to delays and disputes. A crucial challenge is also the economic issues that

¹⁸ UNESCO. "Text of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage." [Unesco.org, UNESCO, 2003, ich.unesco.org/en/convention](https://ich.unesco.org/en/convention).

¹⁹Agreement on New Caledonia <https://www.peaceagreements.org/wggsite/downloadAgreementDocument/id/1512>

small islands face and hinder independence. This is closely related to the lack of natural resources, which makes populations rely a lot on imported goods and foreign aid in general and creates economic independence in foreign nations.

Furthermore, the effect of climate change is really negative for these nations, that has the rising of sea levels and extreme weather conditions as the main result. Indigenous populations decide then to emigrate and start a new life in other nearby nations, leaving their culture and fight for independence behind. Colonialism as well as globalization have led to the erosion of Indigenous cultures and languages. People have started to lose their identity due to the dominance of Western cultural norms that undermines the Aboriginal's identity. As a result the majority of the Indigenous languages were illegal and not passed to the following generations. Lastly, even if the United Nations support decolonization and achieving independence the colonial powers as well as geopolitical stakeholders deeply resist letting these Nations become independent. Thus, they have not complied with the majority of frameworks and agreements that have been proposed or even established in the past.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

France

France's involvement in Oceania's Indigenous independence movements has been really important and played a major role throughout the years. Seeing as France has been a world power and a major colonizer of Oceania in the past, its actions have determined the situation at the moment. Its actions are more concentrated on its territories namely New Caledonia, French Polynesia, Wallis and Futuna.

In New Caledonia, a French overseas territory in the Pacific Ocean, the indigenous group of people named Kanak has long sought independence. In 1998, France and pro-independence Kanak groups signed the Nouméa Accord, whose main aim was to address historical and cultural injustices as well as to ensure New Caledonias' full political independence. It was one of the first legal documents and agreements signed which recognized in general the identity of indigenous people and especially the Kanak ones. In addition, it established a path towards self-determination. However, France still provides some assistance to the region in terms of defence and education.

In other French territories, like the French Polynesia, the indigenous group of people there demanded independence, after 1996 after 30 years of nuclear testing by France, something that caused environmental and health issues. Although the UN added the territory to its decolonization list in 2013, France still isn't in favor of independence, while the country emphasizes the fact that the region can be

developed within the French Republic. Lastly, in the other two territories of France, Wallis and Futuna, independence movements are much less prominent owing to the influence of traditional chiefs and alignment with French Governance. France in general promotes and suggests the integration of all these regions with France and underestimates Indigenous self-determination.²⁰

Fiji

Fiji has played a vital role when it comes to supporting the independence of Indigenous populations in Oceania owing to its position as a regional leader and its own past with Indigenous identity. Fiji, as a member of the Melasian Spearhead Groups (MSG)²¹ and the Pacific Island Forums has advocated for decolonization and self-determination. Even though it supports these regions, its stance is strongly moderated by its desire and need to maintain strong diplomatic and economic relationships with colonial powers such as France, Australia, and New Zealand. The country has also been the main host of regional discussions and summits, which include the participation of representatives from both colonial powers and Indigenous populations and the dialogue on decolonization. A very important and popular summit that Fiji hosted was the World's Indigenous Summit on Rabi Island in August 2023. It was organised by the Rabi Island Community Hub (RICH), to honor the resilience of the Banaban people, who suffered from displacement and were obliged to leave their ancestral land, Kiribati and move to Fiji in 1945. The summit aimed to highlight the annoying human rights struggles these people face as well as the environmental destruction of their homeland.²² Summing up, Fiji has proven its advocacy for the rights and sovereignty of Indigenous peoples across Oceania, through its participation in global forums like the United Nations.²³

United States of America (USA)

The role of the USA is crucial yet strategic when it comes to the issue of the independence of Indigenous populations in Oceania, especially in its territories like Guam, American Samoa and the Northern Mariana Islands. All these territories are governed under the United States' law but lack the full constitutional rights and political representation. A great majority of indigenous populations in these specific areas have encouraged movements for greater autonomy and independence as well as self-determination. However, the USA's responses have been rather negative. The United States wants to

²⁰ Fisher, Denise. *France in the South Pacific: Power and Politics*. May 2013, press.anu.edu.au/publications/france-south-pacific, <https://doi.org/10.22459/fsp.05.2013>. Accessed 25 Aug. 2019.

²¹Home. msgsec.info.

²² https://icaad.ngo/2023/08/17/banaba-indigenous-summit-recap/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

²³ Macdonald, Barrie K., and Sophie Foster. "Fiji | History, Map, Flag, Points of Interest, and Facts." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 21 Dec. 2024, www.britannica.com/place/Fiji-republic-Pacific-Ocean/History.

maintain territorial control due to the regions' strategic military interests. Keeping that into consideration, the USA has supported the independence of Pacific nations like Palau, Micronesia and the Marshall Islands only if the country has military access and influence on the region, through the Compact of Free Association (COFA)²⁴. However, when it comes to its own territories and regions the United States is less active in promoting and addressing matters of sovereignty. This whole status of the USA on the matter proves its strategic approach, which is based on balancing the recognition of self-determination and the need to prioritize regional and geopolitical stability.

Pacific Islands Forum (PIF)

One of the most important organizations that have played a major role in supporting and promoting self-determination as well as decolonization in Oceania has been the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF). It was adopted in 1971 and its goal has been since then to enhance collaboration between Nations in Oceania. The PIF does not only include independent nations but also territories under foreign rule, like New Caledonia and French Polynesia, in which Indigenous populations are still trying to establish autonomy and gain independence.

Although it advocates for the Indigenous population's right to self-determination, its support for full independence varies a lot. It has, for example, provided assistance to New Caledonia as well as tried to raise concerns over the legacy of the French nuclear testing in French Polynesia from 1966 until 1996. It has managed to do so through raising awareness about the environmental and health impacts of French nuclear testing in French Polynesia.

At the same time, it has effectively advocated for justice for affected communities and made efforts to promote greater transparency and accountability from France regarding the long-term consequences of these Nuclear tests. However, its approach is cautious owing to the different interests and policies of its members. This mostly happens with nations that have the tendency to maintain close relationships with colonial power like France or the USA.²⁵

²⁴“Compacts of Free Association | U.S. Department of the Interior.” *U.S. Department of The Interior*, www.doi.gov/oia/compacts-of-free-association.

²⁵ Pacific Islands Forum. “The Pacific Islands Forum | Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat.” Forumsec.org, 2024, forumsec.org/pacific-islands-forum.

Amnesty International

Amnesty International strongly advocates for the rights of indigenous populations in Oceania, while it aims to focus more on self-determination and independence. Although the organization does not call for independence straight forward, it manages to highlight human rights violations and strongly encourages and promotes Indigenous efforts to control and at least have a say in their political and social affairs. In addition, Amnesty International especially supports the right to self-determination, as it is also stated in international law, while it tries to find effective and rapid solutions to ensure that populations in New Caledonia or the French Polynesia for example have the ability to exercise their rights as individuals and member of indigenous populations without repression. Like the Pacific Island Forum, Amnesty International has managed to raise concerns about political repression and in French Polynesia it has effectively addressed the issue of nuclear testing and its impacts under the environmental, social and political scope. Overall, Amnesty International fully supports the recognition of these populations as well as their rights through the establishment of campaigns, with the aim of raising awareness and promoting global recognition of their rights.²⁶

Blocs Expected

Alliance Supporting Decolonization and Indigenous Self-Determination

This bloc would be the one clearly supporting the self-determination of Indigenous populations. It is the one that consists of countries that prioritize human rights and cultural preservation. Nations like that could be countries that already have really strong Indigenous advocacy frameworks, which could lead to the promotion of Indigenous independence on an international level. Countries that belong to this alliance are for example Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the Russian Federation.

Alliance Supporting Integration with the colonizers who have already gained political rights in the country

This bloc might include nations and countries that are rather neutral or believe that the integration of Indigenous populations with the colonial powers could become far more rapidly and easily implemented.

²⁶Amnesty International. "Amnesty International." *Amnesty International*, 23 Dec. 2024, www.amnesty.org/en.

These Nations might have concerns over unresolved issues that would cause even more problems, like the alignment of borders. Countries that belong to this alliance are for example USA, France, and the UK.

Timeline of Events

| Date | Description of Event |
|----------------------|---|
| December 14, 1960 | The UN General Assembly Resolution 1514 was adopted by the UN General Assembly. |
| Mai 28, 1961 | The Non-governmental organization (NGO) Amnesty International was established. |
| from 1966 until 1996 | Nuclear testing in French Polynesia by French authorities occurred. |
| August 5, 1971 | The Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) was established to promote collaboration between nations in Oceania and enhance peacekeeping operations. |
| June 25, 1993 | The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action was adopted at the World Conference on Human Rights. |
| 1994 | Palau and the Marshall Islands became independent after signing a Compact of Free Association (COFA) with the United States. |
| May 5, 1998 | The Noumea Accord was signed between the French government and the pro- independence Kanak leaders. |
| September 13, 2007 | The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) was adopted that established a legal framework for the recognition, promotion and protection of the rights of indigenous peoples. |

Relevant UN Resolutions, Treaties & Events

UN General Assembly Resolution 1514 (1960)

The UN General Assembly Resolution 1514 was adopted by the UN General Assembly on 14 December 1960. It is also known and globally recognized as the “Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples”.²⁷ This UN resolution set the foundation for international decolonization efforts by highlighting the right of Indigenous populations to self-determination and outlining the importance of the end of colonialism in all its forms. The resolution declares, as it also stated in the formal UN document that “all people have the right to self-determination and by virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development”²⁸. In addition to that, it recognizes colonialism as a huge violation of fundamental human rights, while it holds it as a contravention of the United Nations Charter. Furthermore it calls important colonial powers to take action so that the colonized population gain full independence. The resolution mostly has to do with the colonization problems in Africa, Asia and Oceania. Its impact has already been really positive for the Indigenous population in the colonial territories. It has successfully legitimized anti-colonial movements and pressured strong colonial powers, like France or the USA to comply with international norms. Due to its principles, it has been much easier for such territories to start efforts to achieve self-determination. More specifically it has promoted and improved moral as well as legal justification for independence movements in Oceania in regions such as Papua New Guinea, that gained independence from Australia in 1975 and Vanuatu, which also gained independence from the United Kingdom and France in 1980. Moreover the impact of this resolution has been really important, seeing as it managed to strengthen demands for self-governance by indigenous populations.

UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) (2007)

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) was adopted on September 13, 2007. It has been an essential document, since it established a legal framework for the recognition, promotion and protection of the rights of indigenous peoples on an international level. In addition to that, it has outlined important standards for the dignity, well-being and survival of these populations. At the same time it recognizes their fundamental rights to self-determination, culture and

²⁷Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. legal.un.org/avl/ha/dicc/dicc.html.

²⁸ United Nations. “Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples.” *OHCHR*, 14 Dec. 1960, www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/declaration-granting-independence-colonial-countries-and-peoples.

land, with the right to self-determination being the one it highlights the most. It enables Indigenous people to shape their political, economical, social and cultural development independently. Thus, they can freely determine their status and relations alone without the involvement of colonial powers. The framework has also set principles to protect their rights to traditional lands, territories and physical resources, which are essential for their survival and development. Also it calls for Free, Prior and Informed consent (FPIC) before any actions are taken by colonial powers and affect these territories, while it has taken action to ensure the safeguarding of cultural heritage, traditions and languages. Simultaneously, it opposes forced assimilation and stands against the integration of indigenous populations with colonial powers through illegal means. Even if it's not legally binding, it has played a vital role in influencing national policies and encouraging indigenous populations to take action against colonial powers and gain their right to self-determination.²⁹

Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (1993)

The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action was adopted on June 25, 1993, at the World Conference on Human Rights. It has been essential, since its adoption marked a significant step regarding the recognition and protection of indigenous populations rights. After fully acknowledging the historical, cultural and social injustices such populations have faced in the past due to colonialism it outlined and highlighted the need to seek justice as well as equality for them. One of the most important, and well-known, actions and principles of the Declaration is the fact that it reaffirmed Indigenous peoples' right to self-determination, while it enabled them control on their own their political, social and economical affairs. In addition, the Declaration has outlined the significance of the cultural preservation of these regions as far as language and traditions go. It also called for immediate recognition of their land rights and encouraged enhanced access to healthcare and education. The Declaration laid a foundation for other legal documents, like the UNDRIP, while it itself remains one of the most important documents for the preservation of justice and dignity of Indigenous people on an international level.³⁰

²⁹ ---. *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. 13 Sept. 2007, pp. 1–32, www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf, <https://doi.org/10.1353/hrq.2011.0040>.

³⁰ United Nations. "Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples." *OHCHR*, 14 Dec. 1960, www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/declaration-granting-independence-colonial-countries-and-peoples.

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

Nouméa Accord (1998)

The Noumea Accord was signed on May 5, 1998 between the French government and the pro-independence Kanak leaders, an indigenous population in New Caledonia. The agreement aimed to address the legacy of the colonial actions in the region as far as set a foundation for the establishment of a path towards autonomy and self-determination. The most important action of the Noumea Accord was surely the fact that the indigenous population of New Caledonia finally gained the right to be responsible for the political, economical, social and cultural status of the region. This gradual transfer of powers from France to New Caledonia included handing over responsibilities for healthcare, labor laws, education and even taxation, while the French government finally granted New Caledonias' symbolic elements of statehood, like its own flag and even anthem. The Accord also focuses on the cultural preservation of the Kanak population in terms of language and other traditions, through the development and improvement of the educational system. At the same time the Accord has recognized the importance of sharing the benefits of New Caledonias' natural resources, which have had a huge impact on the region's economic and political development.³¹ Thus it goes without saying, that the benefits of the Noumea Accord have been significant, since it has increased and promoted political autonomy as well as economic self-determination. At the same time it gets confronted with a variety of limitations, like the ongoing dependence of many nations on France and the extreme political divisions between pro and anti- independence groups.

The Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in the Pacific

The Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in the Pacific is a regional legal framework that outlines the major fundamental rights and challenges of Indigenous populations and communities in the Pacific. Its foundation is the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), while it focuses on the impacts of colonization, land dispossession, cultural erosion and climate change due to illegal human acts by strong colonial powers. The Declaration also recognizes the land rights of indigenous populations and thus affirms them to take control over their territories and rich natural resources. Like every

³¹"The Noumea Accord and Decolonisation in New Caledonia on JSTOR." [www.jstor.org/JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/25169446](http://www.jstor.org/JSTOR/www.jstor.org/stable/25169446).

other legislation piece it highlights the importance of the preservation of cultural heritage as well as the significance of self-determination and governance for these specific regions and communities.

Furthermore, the Declaration is the only one that recognizes the vital role of Indigenous People in the protection of the environment and encourages their active participation in decision-making through free, prior and informed consent, a principle that was set in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).³² Consequently, the most important benefits of this Declaration has been the fact that it has affirmed the Indigenous Peoples land rights as well as cultural preservation and governance. Its actions could have been even more active and important if it wasn't accompanied with its limitations, namely its weak enforcement mechanisms and resistance from powerful states and colonizers.

Pacific Islands Forum (PIF)

The Pacific Island Forum (PIF) is a regional intergovernmental organization which has successfully brought together 18 countries and territories from the Pacific region. It was established in 1971 and its aim since then has been to promote and improve the cooperation between Pacific Island nations as well as to address and tackle common challenges and problems that have to do with economic or political development and may occur. The PIF does include both independent states and countries as well as territories that are being controlled by the French government or any other colonial power. Hence, it also serves as a platform of communication between colonial powers and leaders from Indigenous populations.

Like other organizations, the Pacific Islands Forum highlights the promotion of regional stability, sustainable development and even the well-being of Pacific populations. An issue that has been the center of attention for the organization is the recognition of Indigenous populations' rights, while it has done efforts to protect their cultural heritage and land-rights.³³ All in all, the benefits of the Pacific Islands Forum have been really important in terms of tackling the issue, since it has promoted and fostered political cooperation as well as effectively addressed economic and environmental challenges. However its limitations include the extreme influence of colonial powers on its actions and unequal representation of non-independent territories.

³²United Nations. *Fact Sheet Indigenous Peoples in the Pacific Region*. 2008, www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/factsheet_Pacific_FINAL.pdf.

³³ ---. "The Pacific Islands Forum | Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat." *Forumsec.org*, 2024, forumsec.org/pacific-islands-forum.

Possible Solutions

Establishment of legal frameworks to promote recognition of Sovereignty and Political Autonomy

One really effective and important solution could be to promote and call for the formal recognition of the sovereignty of Indigenous populations in Oceania as well as political autonomy. Governments and especially colonial powers should grant these communities the ability and right to govern themselves with their own political and strategic system based on traditional practices. A very important aspect of this solution is the creation and establishment of legal frameworks that were to ensure political representation and the fact that Indigenous population's voices are heard, a matter of utmost importance. Such frameworks could rapidly enhance their political and international representation, since Indigenous leaders could secure reserved seats in national parliaments. In addition to that, Indigenous nations and regions could participate more easily in international organizations, such as the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF). Lastly, if they had recognized sovereignty, Indigenous Nations could after all these years take legal action in international courts to protect their lands and rights. Thus, the communities could regain control over their region, govern it on their own and then bring their cultures as much as they can back to life.

Promotion of gaining land rights and establishment of Resource Sharing Agreements

The restoration of Indigenous land rights is one of the most important aspects when it comes to achieving full independence. It is a matter of utmost importance for the UN or other NGOs to prioritize the establishment and promotion of resolutions and legal documents that have immediate connection with returning the traditional lands to their rightful and real owners as fast as possible. If this can not be rapidly feasible then agreements should be proposed, after which colonial powers share natural resources with the Indigenous populations. It is crucial for indigenous communities to benefit from the extraction or even utilization of their lands and natural resources not only for economic reasons but also for political ones. When they have rights over their land, and even control over it, then it gets progressively easier for them to become fully independent. These agreements could also include economical compensation, community development funds and even active participation in environmental protection.

Enhancing the Educational System

Promoting enhanced education and investing in the educational system of the Indigenous populations is the key to sustainable development and the change of their future. Schools should outline the importance of Indigenous languages as well as their history, which is a way to prohibit cultural erosion

and rather preserve the aboriginal's cultural heritage, traditions and language. When educated Indigenous populations will start to fight more for their rights and advocate for them in every way possible. The UN or other organizations such as the Pacific Islands Forum should provide these communities economic assistance so as for them to be able to build their own schools and focus as much as possible on the education of the next generations as well as teaching their native language to everyone with such origins, who did not had the hanse to learn it.

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