Committee: Special Conference  

Issue title: The Question of National Autonomy  

Submitted by: Dániel Frank, Deputy Chair of the SPCF  

Edited by: Eszter D. Kovács, President of the ECOSOC  

Introduction  
Today, there are several ethnic groups living inside already established nations. These minorities might seem out of place due to major differences in their culture, religion and language between them and the common inhabitants of the nation. Such groups share one goal. The pursuit of autonomy. They seek the right to self-determination and self-governance. Aiming to emerge as a new nation, these ethnic groups are constantly fighting against the nation’s government either peacefully or violently. The question of national and political autonomy is how to make such minorities regain their independence and the ability of self-governance from the nation they are living in, without having to start a violent conflict.  

Definition of key terms  

Autonomy: An individual’s capacity for self-determination or self-governance.  

Political autonomy: The property of having one’s decisions honored, respected and heeded within a political context.  

Nation: A significant body of people united by common descent, history, culture, or language, inhabiting a particular state or territory.
State: A nation or territory considered as an organized political community under one government.

United Nations Trusteeship Council: One of the UN’s organs, focused on granting autonomy to Trust Territories if possible, and at least make the inhabitants of such territories feel as independent as possible by posing regulations on the countries governing these colonies.

Non Self-Governing Territories: Territories which participated in the International Trusteeship Program between 1947 and 1994 with the aim of receiving autonomy from the United Nations. Also known as Trust Territories.

General Overview
Autonomy as a concept originates from Ancient Greece, where it was noted as one’s right for self-determination. Beyond that, it is an ideal which is followed globally. The term Political autonomy specifies it and means the ability for self-governance. By losing autonomy, a nation gets deprived of these rights, thus it falls under the administration of a higher level legal entity. This process usually occurs by violent means. An example for it is the when the Soviet Union annexed several countries following the Second World War and forced them to abide their laws and govern as they wished. It is also a mean of violation of national independence. During history the regaining of autonomy had only been imaginable throughout a military conflict. Today, this is not the case, since the ultimate goal of the United Nations is the protection and preservation of international peace and security.

An example for the question of national autonomy would be the compilation of still existing colonies. The UN adopted the General Assembly Resolutions 66 and 67 on 14th January 1946, which introduced the concept of Non-Self Governing territories (the UN Charter Chapter XI articles 73 and 74 explained their importance). They are colonies/former colonies which currently seek autonomy.
The amount of these territories has rapidly decreased in the past. Aiming for the legal separation of these areas from the overruling countries, the United Nations and specifically the Trusteeship Council hoped to give these colonies complete political autonomy. Where it was not possible, these territories joined neighboring independent countries. The council was disbanded in 1994 after the last Non-Self Governing territory, Palau gained autonomy.

A case can be described as an issue of national autonomy when a minority group inside a nation has a significant population and decides to break away from the mother country and seek autonomy. Some important cases for this example would be the situation of Catalonia or the Albanian minority in Kosovo. The Catalan people base their claims for independence on their prominent population of approximately 7.5 million people and their long history, which dates back to the 15th century. The outcome of the situation is yet to be known. The circumstances with Macedonia were similar. There is an immersive amount of Albanian people living in the country, whom held a referendum in 7 November 2004 in order to gain more autonomy but ultimately failed due to the lack of participants in the voting.

The question of the Kurdish people in the Middle East is a comparable issue to the previous two examples, however, with the difference being that the approximately 35 million Kurdish people do not live in a singular fixed country, but in 4 different ones (Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey to be specific). They are also receiving worldwide criticism for participating actively in the conflicts of the region, which can result in their chances of becoming an autonomous state completely disappear.

National autonomy also concerns the independence of already established nations. Being a part of a political alliance might result in regulations in the member countries self-governance. Such regulations can lead to the dissatisfaction of the country which would then seek autonomy by leaving the alliance. An example for this situation is the United Kingdom which is determined to exit the European Union.

Today there is a significant number of territories and minorities all around the world that find themselves oppressed and deprived of their rights for self-determination and most importantly, independence. The examples listed above might be different but they root from the same place, which is individuals’ shared desire for freedom. The aim of this conference is to find a proper and peaceful solution to this widespread issue.
Timeline of Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14 December 1946</td>
<td>The General Assembly passes Resolutions 66 and 67, which introduce the concept of Trust Territories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 1947</td>
<td>The first session of the United Nations Trusteeship Council.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 May 1994</td>
<td>The United Nations Trusteeship Council deems its mission fulfilled, therefore it gets disbanded.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Previous attempts to solve the issue

For almost half a century, it had been the United Nations Trusteeship Council’s duty to grant the Non-Self Governing territories autonomy to some extent or even completely. In the year 1994 the last Trust Territory was declared autonomous, which led to the dissolution of the committee and the International Trusteeship System as a whole. This was a conclusion of the former colonies’ situation or at least for the vast majority of them. In the past, the road to self-governance had been through violent revolts and bloody conflicts. Peace treaties following military conflicts were also a mean to grant autonomy to minorities. These days, new autonomous states mostly emerge from situations where minorities suffered severe human rights abuses.

Possible solutions and approaches

As it had been mentioned before, the conflicts concerning the question of national autonomy cannot be solved by violent means. Finding a common ground may be the only acceptable solution. It is of utmost importance that we do not change state boundaries considering that such resolution can lead to a violent dispute that would eventually escalate into a military conflict. We must not forget that meanwhile the Special Conference’s goal is to find a solution to the question of national autonomy; it cannot go against the United Nations’ duty, which is the protection and preservation of international peace.
Useful Documents and Sources

https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/state
http://www.iep.utm.edu/autonomy/
https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/69/UN_General_Assembly_Resolutio
n_66_%281%29.pdf
https://www.quora.com/Which-countries-still-have-colonies-1
http://america.aljazeera.com/opinions/2016/1/can-we-criticize-the-kurds.html