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INSTITUTIONS & INDIVIDUALS

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Chair Letter

Dear Delegates,

I am extremely pleased to welcome you to BUSUN XXIV and the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (SPECPOL)! My name is Daniel Kim and I am a freshman from Los Angeles, California who plans on concentrating in Biology. I have had a year of participating as a delegate in MUN with my high school club and this is my first time chairing, so I am looking forward to the experience. I know that the current format is not one you may be familiar with, but I hope to alleviate any difficulties you may face and support you in any way that I can as your committee chair!

One of the six main committees in the United Nations General Assembly, the United Nations General Assembly Fourth Committee, known as the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (SPECPOL), addresses a variety of topics that includes public information, the use of outer space, peacekeeping operations, decolonization, the Israeli-Palestine Conflict, refugees and human rights, territorial disputes, and atomic radiation. This increased flexibility and broad range of responsibilities not only makes SPECPOL unique from the other five General Assembly Committees, but also means that the committee is heavily involved in many international issues.

One of the topics that will be discussed in this committee is the future of Israeli-Controlled Territories and how to continue moving forward in these highly volatile territorial disputes that are essential for peace in the region. The second topic will be the exploration of nuclear waste disposal and storage, a multifaceted problem that involves environmental factors, social factors, economic factors, and more.

If you have any questions or concerns about the topics, this background guide. or the conference, please feel free to contact me. I am very excited to meet you all and have no doubt that you will all do your best to make BUSUN XXIV and this committee a great, memorable conference!

Best,
Daniel Kim
SPECPOL Chair
Class of 2024
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Topic One

Future of Israel-Controlled Territories

Introduction

Amidst the volatile situation in the Middle East, the disputes regarding Israeli-occupied territories are some of the most tense in the region. The conflict over these areas, such as the Syrian Golan Heights and the West Bank, greatly obstructs peace and cooperation between Israel and its neighboring countries, preventing the advancement of other important topics such as growing refugee populations.[1] These territories, and what ultimately ends up happening to them, will be key to the future of the Middle East. Addressing and deriving a solution for these occupied territories would mark a critical step towards peace, but poses a difficult, ambitious challenge.

History

The dispute regarding Israeli-Controlled territories can be traced back to the 1967 Six-Day War, a conflict between Israel and the neighboring nations of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan. The formation of an independent Israel State through the Israeli Declaration of Independence in 1948[2] created immediate contention between the newly-founded Israel and its surrounding nations, leading to several military conflicts over two decades. These strained relations and several other disagreements, including an Egyptian blockade of the Strait of Tiran, contributed to the Six-Day War. Israeli success in ground and air offensives led to massive gains in land that extended Israel control into the Sinai Peninsula, the West Bank, Eastern Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights.[3]

Although the Sinai Peninsula was eventually returned to Egypt in 1982,[4] Israel still occupies the Golan Heights and West Bank today. The return of the Golan Heights remains a major concern for the Syrian government.[5] Despite the division within the country due to the 2011 Syrian Civil War, Israeli relinquishment of the Golan Heights is an issue many Syrians agree upon. Israel continues to control the western two-thirds of the Golan Heights, which it officially annexed in the 1981 Golan Heights Law,[6] an action only recognized by the United States.[7]

The Golan Heights is a region lies to the Northwest of Israel, with Lebanon to its north, Syria to the East, and Jordan to its south. It is an extremely

mountainous, rocky region with almost no agricultural value. Instead, it possesses historical value for Syria and strategic value for Israel, with the mountains allowing for more efficient monitoring against potential military threats. The area acts as a valuable strategic buffer against Syria and also provides access to the Sea of Galilee, the only freshwater lake available to Israel.[8]

Negotiations regarding the return of the Golan Heights have been discussed, with Israel previously offering to end their occupation of the Golan Heights, along with the Sinai Peninsula, in return for peace; this, however, was rejected by the Khartoum Resolution. Discussions have followed, but have led to little success. Syria asserts that Israel must comply with a full withdrawal from the Golan Heights back to the 1967 borders, as opposed to Israel's desire for the pre-1948 border. Although only a 100 meter difference between the two borders, the 1967 border would give Syria access to the Sea of Galilee, restricting Israel's access to this water source.[9]

Syria and its surrounding allies have insisted that peace in the Middle East is not obtainable unless the situation of the Golan Heights is resolved. Syria maintains that the continued Israeli occupation of this territory is a violation of their national sovereignty,[10] with other nations in the international community not accepting Israel's annexation of these lands.[11]

Similarly, the West Bank, which was originally controlled by Jordan before their loss in the Six-Day War, lies in a state of complexity. Ever since its occupation in 1967, Israel and Palestine have engaged in talks to resolve the status of the territory. These meetings have culminated in the Oslo II Accord, which has shaped the current landscape and organization of the West Bank. Currently, the administration of the area is performed by both Israel and Palestine, specifically the Palestinian National Authority (PNA).[12]

In accordance with the Oslo II Accord, the West Bank is currently split into Area A, B, and C. Area A, which comprises about 18% of the West Bank, is under Palestinian governance and military control. Area B, which consists of 22% of the West Bank, experiences Palestinian administration and joint Israeli-Palestinian security. Finally, Area C has

full Israeli civil and military control. Area C is the section of the West Bank at 60%, making it a majority of the West Bank. With these current area designations, Palestinian communities in Area A and B are isolated from one another as they are surrounded by Area C.[13]

In addition to being the largest zone, Area C is also the location of most of the West Bank's undeveloped farmland and resources. Palestinian access to this land is greatly limited and restricted. This exclusion has negatively impacted Palestine's economy and hindered the country's ability to build infrastructure.[14]

The strategic importance of the West Bank is also immensely valuable to Israel. Its placement is immediately adjacent to Israel's coastal plain, which houses most of the nation's population and infrastructure. The north-south mountain range that constitutes most of the West Bank are also centers of infrastructure, such as the highways connecting major cities. The loss of the West Bank would threaten the center of the country and greatly damage its economy.[15]

Palestine, represented by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), has asserted its claim over the West Bank since 1988, with Jordan ceding their territorial claim to the PLO.[16] The Israeli presence in the West Bank (especially militarily), and displeasure with the Oslo II Accord, have led to conflicts and uprisings known as intifadas. These violent clashes have left both Israeli and Palestinian casualties, further fueling the animosity between the two nations.[17]

Annexation of the West Bank, which has previously been proposed, was recently announced by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for 2020. Under this plan, Area C and the Jordan Valley would be officially annexed, which would include several Palestinian communities as well.[18] While there is currently a delay in those plans, it is strongly opposed by the international community. An annexation of the West Bank by Israel would be a violation of international law and would lead to condemnation by the United Nations.[19]

The situation is further complicated by the presence of Israel settlements in these occupied territories, with the Israeli population being around 20,000 in the Golan Heights and

around 400,000 in the West Bank. Despite being viewed as and deemed illegal, Israel has permitted and encouraged its citizens to migrate and settle in these territories since 1967.[20] These settlements and Israel's military presence have often been labeled by Palestinians as a cause of dispute and a major barrier in Israel-Palestinian peace.[21]

Current Situation

In late January of 2020, President Trump released a peace plan regarding the Israel Palestine conflict – "Vision for Peace, Prosperity and a Brighter Future" – that would allow further Israeli movement into the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Specifically, the proposal would legalize Israeli settlements already in existence and allow for further annexation of up to 30 percent of the West Bank.[22] This proposal was met by derision from the Palestinian Authority, the League of Arab Nations, and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, as well as President Mahmoud Abbas of Palestine, who collectively deemed the plan insufficient for the needs of the Palestinian people.[23] In addition, several nations, including France, Russia, Tunisia, and Malaysia,[24] voiced concern about the plan. Other nations, including Germany and the UK, encouraged consideration of the United States' proposal.[25]

By March, however, further negotiations between Israel and Palestine had stalled due to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis. According to a Security Council briefing, despite hopes of further progress towards a two-state solution, "[c]redible negotiations have yet to be launched that will end the occupation and realize a negotiated two-State solution...nor has Israel taken steps to cease all settlement activities and respect related legal obligations during the reporting period." In fact, Israel has continued to build into the West Bank, and tensions have repeatedly turned violent. Some progress has been made, with Israel making small gestures toward peace like lifting shipping restrictions. Additionally, the COVID-19 crisis has offered a unique opportunity for cooperation between Israel and Palestine, with many nations initially praising the two for their mutual efforts to address the growing public health crisis.[26]

Unfortunately, joint efforts have deteriorated as tensions continue to

rise. Despite warnings from the UN, Israel has continued to work toward annexation of the West Bank in line with the United States' proposal, even going as far as to demolish a building used for quarantining COVID-19 patients in Hebron, a city in the West Bank. Israel's efforts have increased tensions between Israel and Palestine, and as deaths climb for both, the future of their COVID-19 response is uncertain.[27] As the COVID-19 crisis continues, it will be of utmost importance to encourage the necessary cooperation to properly address the pandemic.

Tensions with Israel were once again in question following the devastating explosion in Lebanon, the nation north of Israel. After a warehouse of ammonium nitrate exploded in the port of Beirut, over 130 people died, thousands were injured, and many more were displaced. Initially, there seemed to be a potential for conflict between Israel and Lebanon with multiple disputes occurring between Israel and Hezbollah (a Lebanese organization) in the days following the explosion. However, Israel seemed to reverse course and attempt to diffuse the situation, ultimately offering aid and support to Lebanon, despite some animosity towards Lebanon among Israelis.[28] With ongoing potential for conflict, excellent diplomacy will be necessary to continue to work towards peaceful resolutions.

Past Action

In accordance with the mandate system created by the League of Nations, Palestine (as a former colony of Turkey) was a mandate of Britain until May of 1948.[29] In November of 1947, following recommendations from the United Nations Special Commission on Palestine, the UN adopted Resolution 181. The resolution stated that when Britain's mandate of Palestine ended in May of 1948, the region would be divided into an Arab and a Jewish state and religiously significant area around Jerusalem would be controlled by the United Nations. The United States supported the resolution, and US president Truman recognized the State of Israel when it declared independence on May 14, 1948.[30]

Following Israel's declaration of independence and the adoption of Resolution 181, fighting broke out between Palestinian Arabs and Jewish groups. The Palestinian Arabs were joined in their fight against Israeli

forces by Lebanese, Syrian, Iraqi, Egyptian, and Saudi Arabian armies, and fighting continued for nearly a year.[31] Finally, in February of 1949, the Arab nations and Israel ended the fighting with four Armistice Agreements (between Israel and Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria). These agreements forbade further aggression and demarcated military lines that would act as temporary borders until further agreements could be reached. The agreements also stipulated the formation of the Mixed Armistice Commission (MAC) that, with input from the UN, could help maintain the agreements.[32]

As tensions between Israelis and Arabs continued to grow in the years following the Armistice Agreements, both Israel and its Arab neighbors (particularly Egypt, Jordan, and Syria) began preparing for a war that increasingly seemed inevitable. With all nations poised for war, tensions finally boiled over and on June 5, 1967, Israel made the first move with attacks on Egyptian armies. Over six days, Israel swiftly defeated armies from Egypt, Jordan, and Syria, capturing land from each in the process. In the end, Israel had control of the Gaza Strip, the Sinai desert, the Golan Heights, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem, opening the door for further annexation and settlement building.[33] On November 22, 1967, the UN's Security Council responded to "the grave situation in the Middle East" with Resolution 242, which encouraged peace among the Middle Eastern nations and implored Israel to withdraw "armed forces from territories occupied" during the war.[34] Six years later, in October of 1973, Egypt and Syria joined forces to attempt to regain the land Israel had won from them during the six-days war. As the war unfolded, successes on both the Arab and Israeli sides threw the outcome of the war into question, and armies from Iraq, Saudia Arabia, and Jordan joined the war; additionally, the USSR and the USA began supplying the Arabs and the Israelis, respectively, with arms. Near the end of October, de-escalation began with the Security Council's passage of Resolution 338,[35] which called for an immediate cease-fire and negotiations.[36] Initial attempts at negotiating a ceasefire were unsuccessful, but following the involvement of the US and many months of intensive negotiations between the nations, the war officially came to end on June 5, 1974. Both Egypt and Israel were able to claim some victory, and peace was

momentarily restored.

Peace was once again interrupted when Israel invaded Lebanon in 1982 in an attempt to eradicate the PLO, which had amassed in Lebanon, and attacked Syria in a successful effort to get access to more of the PLO in Lebanon. Further turmoil came when the Lebanese Christians Israel had allied themselves with massacred hundreds of Palestinians in refugee camps.[37] Following the events of the war, an International Conference on the Question of Palestine convened in 1983 in Geneva. The conference, among other actions, affirmed the "legitimate inalienable rights" of Palestine and the right of the PLO to participate in negotiations, and condemned "Israel's occupation of the Arab territories" and their refusal to withdraw.[38]

Prompted by Israel's continued settlement building and mounted tensions following the events of 1982, the first of two Palestinian uprisings ("Intifadas") began in 1987.[39] In 1988, after months of turmoil, the PLO declared Palestine an independent state with Jerusalem as its capital.[40]

Efforts towards peace returned to the foreground with the 1993 Oslo Accord, a temporary peace agreement between the PLO (as a representative of Palestine) and Israel. Under the accord, a Palestine Authority would govern the West Bank and the Gaza Strip for the next five years, after which time further talks would continue. The fate of the accord remained in question, particularly after Israeli Prime Minister Rabin was assassinated in 1995. Ultimately, despite further attempts at peace negotiations (largely facilitated by the Clinton administration), Israeli-Palestine violence mounted and by the early 2000s, peace no longer seemed to be on the horizon.[41]

In September of 2000, the second Intifada began. Marked by even more bloodshed than the first, this round of fighting resulted in further Israel movement into Palestine and the construction of a separating wall in the West Bank. Violence largely died down by 2005, but no official peace agreements or cease fires were reached.[42]

Following further attacks, the Security Council adopted Resolution 1860 in 2009 to address the growing crisis. Prompted by "grave concern at the escalation of violence" and the

"deepening humanitarian crisis in Gaza," the resolution called for "an immediate… ceasefire,….the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza," and further steps towards peaceful resolution.[43] Notably, in 2011, Palestine was admitted to UNESCO as a member, and given "non-member observer State status" in the UN in 2012. As violence continued, the Security Council adopted Resolution 2334 in 2016, condemning further Israel settlements in Palestine and emphasizing its continued hope for a two-state solution.[44]

Topic One

Bloc Positions

Israel
Israel has maintained its desire to be a sovereign state for Jewish peoples, located in the region of Palestine.

Palestine
Arab populations in Palestine have resisted the encroachment of Israel on what they view as their land and have actively fought against it.

Arab Nations
Other Arab nations in close proximity to Israel and Palestine, including Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia, have largely supported Palestinian Arabs and have regularly sparred with Israel, including during the Six Day war, the October Wars, and the 1982 War with Lebanon.

United States
The US, under Truman, supported Israel's declaration of independence and recognized it as a nation.[45] Under Johnson, the US publicly warned Israel against starting the war, but in private gave the go-ahead.[46] During the Cold War, as Russia backed Arab forces, the US continued to support Israel by supplying them with weapons. After the October war, the US, through the work of Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, was very active in negotiating peace deals.[47] Additionally, the US, under Clinton, helped to facilitate the Oslo accords.[48] Recently, the Trump administration released a peace plan regarding the Israel Palestine conflict that would allow further Israeli movement into the West Bank and East Jerusalem.[49]
Russia During the six days war, Russia supplied Egypt with a modern air force and warned them of an impending attack by Israel on Syria, catalyzing the war.[50] During the war in 1973, Soviets once again supported the Arabs, supplying them with weapons in advance of the impending battles.[51]

UK
Under the colonial mandate system, Palestine was originally under the control of the UK, but the issue was placed in the hands of the UN in 1947.[52] Today, the UK largely supports a Two State solution.[53]

Topic One

European Union

Today, the EU maintains the objective of a two-state solution and hopes for a peaceful resolution to the conflict. Additionally, the EU expresses "deep concern about accelerated settlement expansion in the West Bank" and condemns the continued violence.[54]

Questions to Consider

- What are possible short-term and long-term solutions your country could propose to address the disputes surrounding Israeli-controlled territories?
- How do you balance the needs of different populations and governments when considering solutions? For example, consider how national sovereignty, religious freedom, historical conflicts, and humanitarian concerns can intersect with the issues at hand.
- The United Nations has been involved with the situation surrounding Israeli-occupied territories since before the nation even declared independence. Not all of these interventions have been successful, and none have led to permanent peace. What should the UN's role be in this crisis? What specifically should SPECPOL's role be?
- What has your country's historic stance been on Israeli-controlled territories? What actions has your country taken?
- How do the values and priorities of your country relate to the issues of Israeli-controlled territories? What other nations do your values as a country align with?
- How can you balance putting forth actionable proposals to address the issues at hand while accurately representing the values of your country?

Topic Two

Further Readings

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- https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/creation-israel
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- https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/10/arab-israeli-war-of-1973-what-happened-171005105247349.html

Topic Two

Exploration of nuclear waste disposal and storage

Introduction

Since its commercialization following World War II, nuclear power has become a widespread source of electricity throughout the world. By harnessing nuclear fission, nuclear power plants are able to generate large amounts of electricity without emitting carbon dioxide and pollutants,[55] making nuclear energy a seemingly ideal energy source. These power plants, however, also create harmful, radioactive waste that can, when improperly disposed of, threaten public and environmental health. Despite several proposals, a clear course of action regarding the treatment and storage of this long-lasting product remains uncertain.

History

The discovery that atoms, when split, release energy was first discovered in 1932 when a group of physicists in Brain found that a lithium atom, when split by a proton, would release a large amount of energy.[56] The discovery of neutrons that same year, which have no charge, allowed for nuclear experimentation. This eventually led to the discovery of nuclear fission by a team of German and Austrian scientists, a process in which a uranium nucleus is split into two by a neutron. The splitting of the nucleus would release more neutrons, causing the nucleus to further split, creating a chain reaction.[57]

The discovery of chain reactions led to controlled reaction in man-made reactors, which was developed for the Manhattan Project, the effort to create an atomic bomb by the Allies. Following the successful creation of the atomic bomb and the conclusion of World War II, the applications of nuclear energy for power began to be explored.[58] Nuclear power plants designed to provide electricity for power grids began to be installed in countries such as the USSR and the United States, with countries around the world soon building their generators as well.

Nuclear power plants are a type of thermal power stations, meaning heat energy is transformed into electric power. This is done by heating water into steam and used to spin a turbine. This, in turn, drives a generator, which produces electricity that is supplied to a power grid and then to communities. The same concept applies in nuclear power plants, which

use controlled chain reactions to release heat energy from uranium atoms, which turns water into steam and powers the generator.[59]

To fuel these power plants, uranium, found in rocks and seawater, must first be mined and filtered. 99% of the resulting compound is Uranium-238 (U-238), the most common isotope of Uranium; U-238, however, is not fissile, meaning it cannot sustain chain reactions. Only 0.7% of the compound contains U-235, a uranium isotope that is fissile, thus requiring a step called enrichment to increase this proportion to 3% to 5% of the compound. The enriched uranium is subsequently made into pellets and placed tubes known as fuel rods. Assortments of these rods creates fuel assemblies, which are used by nuclear power plants.[60]

Despite being nonrenewable, nuclear energy is often seen as a positive power source due to its ability to create electricity without emitting carbon dioxide, the large amount of energy that can be generated from a single pellet, and the reliability of nuclear power plants.[61] While there remains stigma against nuclear generators due to accidents, such as the recent 2011 Fukushima Meltdown,[62] nuclear energy is still regarded as a source of clean energy that can help combat climate change.

The major issue regarding nuclear power plants, however, is the nuclear waste that is produced by used fuel assemblies. There are three levels of nuclear waste that are present throughout the nuclear power generation process. 90% of this waste is low-level waste, which only accounts for 1% of total radioactivity; these are usually contaminated items, such as protective equipment.[63] Intermediate-level waste, which comprises 7% of nuclear waste, is mostly components used in the reactor and therefore requires a longer period of time to return to safe levels. The most serious nuclear waste is high-level waste, which comes from used fuel rods; while this only comprises 3% of the total nuclear waste, it accounts for 95% of the total radiation.[64]

Properly managing and disposing of all levels of waste is critical for the health of humans. Currently, the disposal of nuclear waste is the responsibility of the nation that produces it. Because of this, there is no unified, international disposal policy that can be adhered to. Often, for light-level and intermediate-level waste, near-surface disposal in

shallow underground caverns is widely implemented while deep geological disposal is widely used for high-level waste.[65]

This practice, however, also raises several concerns. Transportation of nuclear waste can possibly lead in accidents. Furthermore, because of the extensive timescale needed for the nuclear waste to reach safe levels, it is unclear whether this method will be successful and secure for the thousands of years that the nuclear waste must be stored.[66] And while international repositories have been proposed, the high security required, especially regarding the prevention of malicious nuclear waste use, has made feasibility difficult.[67]

Another method of disposal is reprocessing, a method that involves separating useful waste from non-useful waste, minimizing the amount that therefore must be disposed of. There are, however, many concerns regarding nuclear proliferation and the spread of fissile materials from this disposal plan. Additionally, transmutation, which involves converting the nuclear waste into less harmful chemical elements, and space disposal are also potential options, although they are extremely difficult and non-viable.[68]

While nuclear power plants typically have a planned lifespan of 30 to 40 years,[69] thousands of hours are required for uranium to return to the radioactivity of the original ore. Proper disposal is critical due to a wide range of negative effects radiation has on environmental and public health. Prolonged exposure for humans often leads to radiation sickness and cancer,[70] while the damages to the environment include prevention of plant reproduction, contamination of water sources, and more.[71]

Today, nuclear energy generates about 10% of the world's power through 440 nuclear power plants throughout the planet. While some power plants continue to close, 55 new power plants are currently under construction, with proposals for hundreds more mainly in Asia and Russia.[72] With these new power plants and continued use of existing generators, an increase of nuclear waste can be assumed as well.

Current Situation

Currently, there is a lack of a centralized, global method of handling nuclear waste, causing disparity in the

ways countries handle their nuclear waste. This ranges from the overall disposal method, with countries including France considering nuclear waste reprocessing,[73] to the type of technology used for specific disposal methods, such as Sweden's KBS-3 system for geological repositories. The widely preferred and most common method for the disposal, however, of nuclear waste, specifically the high-level waste (HLW), is deep geological disposal.[74]

Before any nuclear waste can be disposed, storage for 50 years is highly incentivized to allow for initial radioactivity to decrease so that the waste can be handled. Deep geological storage involves mixing the HLW with other materials in order to form a glass or ceramic that is then encased in a metallic container. This capsule is then buried beneath the grounds at depths that exceed several hundred meters.[75] The site is meant to be untouched from thousands to millions of years until the radioactivity of the HLW is completely depleted.[76]

Deep geological disposal is the plan proposed by most nuclear power countries, with the main proponents for this policy being the United States, Finland, and Sweden.[77] Repositories have been proposed and heavily debated in these countries, with Finland's Onkalo Nuclear Waste Disposal Facility scheduled to be the first repository to begin operation in 2025. These repositories are highly expensive projects, with the Onkalo Facility costing up to $555 million in investments.[78] Until these repositories are approved, constructed, and activated, nuclear waste continues to be kept in interim storage facilities at the nuclear plants or special, designated sites.[79] This short-term solution has been and will remain a widespread method of storage until more deep geological repositories are built. Most countries continue to use this arrangement while waiting for the creation of currently non-existent permanent repositories.[80]

There are, however, several issues involving deep geological disposal. The main concern that arises is the unpredictability of the effects of long-term storage. Since the time required for radiation to decrease to safe, harmless levels often takes thousands of years, there is no clear understanding of how effective repositories will be for this entire duration. In fact, studies have questioned the safety of this disposal method, such as a January 2020

report that found that corrosion of the metal canister holding the HLW can be expedited by the glass or ceramic added to the waste. There are still a number of uncertainties and questions that must be answered.[81]

Nuclear waste continues to rise throughout the world, with nuclear energy use potentially increasing by up to 80% in 2050.[82] With this increase, it is inevitable that the amount of nuclear waste that must be properly disposed of will rise as well. Decommissioning nuclear power plants to reduce nuclear waste, however, will simply bring about conflicts regarding decreased electricity generation and increased pollution, as seen in countries such as Germany.[83] Without a clear, organized vision and plan regarding disposal, nuclear waste accumulation poses to be a volatile topic that will deeply influence energy production, the economy, public safety, and more.

Past Action

There has been and currently is a lack of significant action regarding nuclear waste disposal and storage. With the increased nuclear power usage over the 20th and 21st century, interventions regarding the safety of nuclear reactors have been addressed. For example, in the wake of the 2011 Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) adopted the Action Plan on Nuclear Safety, a global strategy to strengthen nuclear safety.[84] In 2013, the 68th session of the General Assembly passed a draft resolution maintaining its support for the IAEA and the plan.[85]

Unfortunately, most major treaties and resolutions regarding nuclear materials emphasize the safe usage of or non-proliferation of nuclear materials. There have been some actions taken, such as the Bamako Convention, which prohibits the dumping of nuclear waste in Africa,[86] and the United Nations Commission on Human Rights Resolution E/CN.4/RES/1991/47, which supported the decisions of the convention.[87] Furthermore, resolution GC(XXXIV)/RES/530 from the General Conference provided guidelines and recommendations for the international transboundary movement of radioactive waste.[88]

In 2002, the 56th session passed General Assembly Resolution 56/24, which supported the aforementioned decisions and called upon all states to take the appropriate measures to

prevent the dumping of nuclear waste.89 Since then, reports have been commissioned to continue studying the negative implications of nuclear waste,[90] and rules against dumping have been reinforced, such as those regarding unsafe ocean disposal.[91]

There is, however, still no enforceable, global plan regarding nuclear waste disposal. The IAEA has and continues to provide safety guidelines and policy recommendations, such as the *Policies and Strategies for Radioactive Waste Management*, a publication in their nuclear energy safety series that entails safe procedures and strategies countries can consider for responsible nuclear waste disposal.[92] The IAEA can only provide counsel and suggestions, but lacks a global mandate regarding nuclear waste disposal.

Of course, some countries have made considerable strides in their own national nuclear waste disposal programs, such as Finland. This number, however, remains small with many countries settling for short-term storage plans. Even countries with long-term plans face serious opposition, such as the United State's Yucca Repository plan,[93] and there remains much variety between the approaches of different nations, limiting international cooperation.

Topic Two

Bloc Positions

Countries decreasing nuclear energy usage
In several Western countries, especially those in Europe, public acceptance of nuclear energy has fallen, especially due to the safety concerns regarding nuclear reactors and the dangerous longevity of radioactive waste.[94] Nations such as Austria have never had and do not plan to build nuclear reactors[95] while others like Germany have begun to phase out nuclear energy. Although their reasonings may vary, these nations likely seek and support the decreased usage of nuclear energy and safe storage of nuclear waste.

Countries currently using nuclear power
The category comprises most developed nations, including the United States, France, Russia, and more. They are nations that still receive a significant amount of energy from nuclear reactors, thus requiring continued usage of this power source. The nuclear waste disposal plans for these countries will be different, but most will not have long-term, permanent solutions to nuclear waste storage, instead relying on temporary facilities.[96] These countries, therefore, still lack a clear national plan. (However, they may participate in an international cooperation)

Countries scheduled to increase nuclear power
These countries are those that do not possess nuclear power and hope to install the technology, or those that have implemented nuclear power and hope to increase the extent of the usage. This includes nations such as China, which has 45 nuclear power plants operational and 12 new plants under construction, with more still being planned.[97] These are nations that are usually still developing and hoping to take advantage of the higher capacity of nuclear energy. Many countries without nuclear energy currently face logistical problems, such as the limitations of their current power grids, but are receiving support from Russia and China, with the IAEA supervising and providing guidelines.[98] Due to their situations, these nations are unlikely to prioritize waste storage due to the economic costs and additional resources required.

Topic Two

Countries without nuclear power

This group primarily consists of underdeveloped nations in Africa, Asia, and South America that have yet to seriously begin the introduction of nuclear energy. While they have relatively low importance in this matter, they have the potential to eventually become nuclear power-using countries. They, too, will not emphasize the storage of nuclear waste at the moment since there is no nuclear waste that must be dealt with; when nuclear energy is more formally considered, however, there is a high likelihood that this outlook will remain due to the costliness of proper disposal.

Questions to Consider

- How can the current strategies towards nuclear waste storage be improved upon?
- How can a unified, international approach towards nuclear waste storage be devised?
- What steps can the Special Political and Decolonization Committee take to mandate and enforce proper nuclear waste storage?
- In what ways can dependency on nuclear energy be decreased?
- How should the differing energy needs of individual countries be addressed and considered?
- What are the economic effects and factors that will arise when nuclear energy use and waste is regulated?

Topic Two

Further Readings

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