

# NHSMUN50

National High School Model United Nations



**SPECPOL**  
**UPDATE PAPER**



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Hello Delegates!

I welcome you to the Special Political Decolonization Committee for NHSMUN 2024! My name is Maya Checchi, and I will be one of your Assistant Directors alongside Miles Sturges for Session 1 of this conference. While this marks my second year at NHSMUN, it is my first year as part of the staff. Last year, I participated in NHSMUN 2023's UNCTAD committee—a truly unforgettable experience. I am ecstatic that you will be participating in this conference, and I am eager to make it as impactful for you as it was for me.

I was born and raised in Los Angeles, California, but I have also lived in Italy and the Republic of San Marino. Despite being brought up in the US, I grew up surrounded by Italian culture and have always felt it to be my true country of origin. I attend University College London and am a first-year student studying Politics and International Relations. Though only a *short* 11-hour flight from Los Angeles, London has offered me various incredible opportunities, fueling many of my interests apart from academics. For the past few years, I have enjoyed running as a sport. Thanks to London's numerous and extensive parks, I have explored this exciting new city while doing one of the things I enjoy most. Furthermore, I enjoy listening to jazz, rock, and new-wave music and have attended various concerts in the past few months.

Participating in MUN has been fundamental to me, offering hands-on experience in international relations and diplomacy. This activity has been instrumental in helping me improve skills such as public speaking, negotiation, critical thinking, research, and teamwork, deepening my understanding of global crises and our responsibilities toward the broader world. MUN conferences have also allowed me to connect with like-minded peers, significantly contributing to my confidence in public speaking. In essence, MUN has played a pivotal role in enriching my leadership skills preparing me for a career in diplomacy.

If you have any questions, please refer to Miles and me, as we have prepared this Update Paper for you to reference in your research and solutions. We hope you enjoy this topic and the research that comes with it. We cannot wait to meet you all in March!

Best,

Maya Checchi

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Assistant Director, Special Political and Decolonization Committee

Session I



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**Ellie White**

Dear Delegates,

Hello and welcome to NHSMUN 2024! My name is Miles Sturges, and I am incredibly excited to serve as one of your Assistant Directors for the Special Political and Decolonization Committee. I participated in NHSMUN as a delegate in 2022 and 2023, my junior and senior years of high school, in the United Nations Human Settlements Programme and the United Nations Convention Against Corruption.

I am a first-year undergraduate student at Columbia University in New York City, approximately 60 blocks from the Hilton Midtown in the neighborhood of Morningside Heights! I plan to major in Political Science, with one of my subfields of study in International Relations. I am also considering studying statistics, economics, or psychology in some way. Additionally, I enjoy learning French but do not plan to formally study it. I was born and still live in New Hampshire, although I moved between New Hampshire and Vermont when I was younger. I have lived in the Upper Valley region of New Hampshire/Vermont since mid-elementary school, not far from Dartmouth College.

I like to stay busy as much as possible and involve myself in many diverse activities. I am involved in political and journalism organizations at Columbia and non-academic organizations and always try to join more. I recently became certified as an Emergency Medical Technician, and I plan to try to join Columbia's ambulance service in the spring semester. I also participate in other activities and work on-campus jobs, including some in undergraduate admissions. I love walking or biking (or taking the subway) around New York to explore new neighborhoods, stores, restaurants, and more. I also love to ski.

While I only began participating in Model United Nations in my junior year of high school, I am certainly glad I did. I have found MUN incredibly educational and influential in my plans to study political science. I have found that NHSMUN has particularly helped me consider problems in new ways—especially ones I am unfamiliar with in the United States. I encourage you to make the most of your NHSMUN and overall MUN experience by embracing discussion, cooperation, effective communication, and collaboration to discuss real solutions to real-world issues.

Maya and I have prepared an Update Paper to discuss recent developments regarding foreign aid in Sub-Saharan Africa. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions. I look forward to hearing about all of the research!

Best,

Miles Forbes Sturges

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Session I



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Greetings, Delegates!

I am honored and privileged to welcome you all to what I believe is the best committee at NHSMUN 2024, SPECPOL! My name is Tracy Le, and I am humbled to be your Assistant Director for Session II. Even though I have never been to NHSMUN as a delegate, I have participated in many local and national conferences over the last six years, both physical and virtual, as a delegate and staffer. I was also my high school's MUN mentor and Conference Director my senior year and have stuck with staffing ever since.

I was born and raised in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, and moved to Palo Alto, California, in my first year of high school before finally settling in Irvine, California, a few months later. I am a one-year transfer student at Irvine Valley College, transferring to the University of California, Irvine (as of now) in September of 2024. I am studying for a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and a related minor in Public Affairs. I aim to participate in public policy, whether in the US government or international relations. Outside of school, I develop my professional skills by being a Congressional and Legislative Affairs Intern at the California State Assembly. In my free time, I love to drive and hang out with my friends, watch movies (any Oppenheimer fans?), and listen to Nicki Minaj, Yeat, and Tate McRae on repeat (Although I also am a heavy listener of Bollywood and K-POP!)

If I said MUN changed my life, that would be an understatement. MUN has taught me numerous life skills, such as confidence, leadership, collaboration, debating, etc. Most importantly, MUN guided me toward my career path, and I have not looked back since. I had the amazing opportunity to write about Topic A, the status of Gibraltar. When researching this unique topic, I provided you with some crucial information since the publication of the background guide that I believe is imperative to the discussion of Gibraltar. I highly encourage you to utilize this research opportunity to learn more about international territories and diplomatic relations of different countries. No matter how experienced or new you are to MUN, our staffers want delegates to learn, persevere, and challenge themselves. Through both topics, I hope you can take away meaningful lessons that inspire others to participate in the discussion for a promising future.

If you have any questions about either topic or would like some college advice (especially those thinking of transferring after community college), feel free to contact me or any of the dais. We are happy to help (This is a learning opportunity, so please do not hesitate to ask for help!) I am looking forward to reading and listening to your unique solutions!

All the best,

Tracy Le

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Assistant Director, Special Political and Decolonization Committee

Session II



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Hello Delegates!

My name is Emma Carrier (she/her), and I will be your assistant director for Session II SPECPOL this year. I joined Model UN in my freshman year of high school and competed for two years with my team. This is my first time being on NHSMUN staff, but not my first time being a delegate. During my senior year, I was in SPECPOL for my first NHSMUN competition. I am so excited to be back in the committee that started my passion and interest in Model UN!

I am from Kailua-Kona, Hawai'i, and I am a first year at Emory University. I am currently double majoring in data science and computer science, which is definitely keeping me busy. I work with a few clubs at my university, including our international relations club and robotics team. Over the summer, I hope to be working as an intern at one of the observatories on the summit of Mauna Kea (an inactive volcano on the Big Island)! It may seem like my interests are all over the place, but I think that's what keeps life interesting for me. I really love experiencing new things, which is one of the reasons I became a NHSMUN staff in the first place.

One of the things I am most excited to do is meet all of the SPECPOL delegates! I can remember the first time I was a delegate at NHSMUN and I completely understand the anxiety that comes with trying to be your absolute best at conference. My main goal is to be someone who you feel comfortable approaching if you want any advice or feedback on your performance, and I really hope that I can make your NHSMUN experience just as amazing as mine was!

Sincerely,

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Assistant Director, Special Political and Decolonization Committee

Session II





SPECPOL

NHSMUN 2024



# TOPIC A: THE STATUS OF GIBRALTAR

Photo Credit: PookieFugglestein

## Introduction

The Strait of Gibraltar is known for its strategic location at the entrance of the Mediterranean Sea. Since the 18th century, ownership of the strait has been a point of contention between Spain and the United Kingdom (UK).<sup>1</sup> As outlined in the background guide, both states have claimed territory ownership and have refused to concede it to the other side. The conflict over Gibraltar represents colonial conflicts since the Strait transitioned from Spanish territory to British territory in the late 1700s. The situation also represents the need for economic stability and resolving past colonial holdovers.<sup>2</sup>

Over the past few months, several developments have impacted the dispute. First, major elections have been held in Spain, the UK, and Gibraltar. These elections have changed who leads talks over ownership of the strait. These also demonstrate the power of elections in shaping the international community. The recently elected leader of Gibraltar, Fabian Picardo, has made many strong vows to the people of Gibraltar, as well as the Gibraltar Socialist Labour Party (GSLP). These include the promise that he will work towards fixing the strait's future relationship with the European Union (EU).<sup>3</sup> The UK and Spain have also started to talk about the ease of transportation between Gibraltar's ports. This would include its airports, shipping ports, and access to other EU countries after Brexit.<sup>4</sup>

Both of these updates have shown how the conflict over the strait is still shaping the political landscape of Europe. Delegates in SPECPOL should read about the updates to the conflict and do further research on how international negotiations, elections, and trade can create changes in the global community.

## Spain, UK, and Gibraltar Elections and their Effect on Sovereignty

In late 2023, Spain, the UK, and Gibraltar all held major elections within their countries. The results of these elections

have changed how all three work to resolve the conflict. The two leading parties in Spain have different perspectives about Spain's role in the international community and the Gibraltar dispute. This, combined with several rounds of voting, has caused turmoil in the country. In contrast, the UK held a much smaller election, but one that demonstrates the influence of political parties on the dispute over Gibraltar. The final example is the elections in Gibraltar, which are the most important to understand as they reflect the opinions of Gibraltarians.

On July 23, 2023, Spain held elections for all 350 Spanish lower houses and 208 senators. There were 37.4 million Spanish voters in these elections, including 2.3 million voters abroad. Spain's right-wing People's Party won most of the seats up for election. In recent years, the right-wing party has emphasized increased national unity and less government intervention in the economy. This is especially true under the leadership of Alberto Núñez Feijóo.<sup>5</sup> During this election, the People's Party defeated the left-wing Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE). The PSOE focuses on advocacy for social justice and support for welfare services. Pedro Sánchez leads the PSOE.<sup>6</sup> However, this election ended with a government deadlock since no party could receive a majority in the parliament. A majority is met when the difference between the two parties that received the most votes is over 33 percent.<sup>7</sup> Since they

<sup>1</sup> "Gibraltar and Spain in dispute over sovereignty 'violation,'" *Associated Press*, February 3, 2023, <https://apnews.com/article/spain-government-united-kingdom-fabian-picardo-gibraltar-12f96aad51303f1eeb9558e2461375f3>.

<sup>2</sup> *Associated Press*, "Gibraltar and Spain in dispute over sovereignty 'violation.'"

<sup>3</sup> Agence France Presse, "Fabian Picardo Narrowly Reelected Leader Of Gibraltar," *Barron's*, October 13, 2023, <https://www.barrons.com/news/fabian-picardo-narrowly-reelected-leader-of-gibraltar-a6e9ffb9>.

<sup>4</sup> "UK and Spain resume contact in Malaga over Gibraltar deal," *SUR in English*, December 8, 2023, <https://www.surinenglish.com/gibraltar/and-spain-resume-contact-malaga-over-gibraltar-20231208095519-nt.html>.

<sup>5</sup> "Spain election: who won and what happens next?" *Reuters*, July 24, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/spains-messy-election-outcome-what-you-need-know-2023-07-24/>.

<sup>6</sup> "Spain — 2023 general election," *Politico*, accessed December 24, 2023, <https://www.politico.eu/europe-poll-of-polls/spain/>.

<sup>7</sup> Alasdair Fotheringham, "Spain's snap vote: How it works and what to expect on July 23," *Aljazeera*, July 19, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/7/19/spains-snap-vote-how-it-works-and-what-to-expect-on-july-23>.



Recently elected Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez  
Credit: European Parliament

could not form a government, the People's Party was forced to concede to the Socialist Party. This was partly due to the increasing support of Catalan and Basque nationalists for the Socialist Party.<sup>8</sup>

In August of 2023, Feijóo, the leader of the right-wing party, asked members of the Socialist Party to support him as prime minister. If elected, he promised to work with the left-wing party on six 'pacts,' or key issues. These included, among others, social welfare, the economy, and, most important for this topic, Spain's territorial organization.<sup>9</sup> However, Feijóo was ultimately unsuccessful in gaining support from the left-wing party. One major reason was that both parties had different ideas on managing international territories. Sánchez, the leader of the left-wing party, has stated that his party supports more autonomy for territories rather than greater Spanish control of territories.<sup>10</sup> The government remained in turmoil, as in September of 2023, Spain's Socialist Party won

another general election by a narrow margin. This meant that they failed, once again, to meet a parliamentary majority.<sup>11</sup> After a four-month government deadlock, Sánchez won the Spanish election in late November. This meant he secured another term as Prime Minister, a position he has held since 2018.<sup>12</sup>

Delegates should consider both parties' position towards Gibraltar. Sánchez had been working on an agreement with the UK to determine the status of the Strait after Brexit and to allow mobility between Gibraltar and Spain. However, calling a general election in July 2023 suspended the talks.<sup>13</sup> One previous action that Sánchez and the left-wing party have taken is declaring an amnesty law between Catalonia and Spain unconstitutional. The law has ensured that both groups can maintain a peaceful social and political situation for all citizens.<sup>14</sup> While not directly connected to Gibraltar, the suspension of this law has delayed progress on related talks and

8 Alasdair Soussi, "Spain election drama: Sanchez wins backing for new term after Catalan deal," *Al Jazeera*, November 16, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/11/16/spains-election-drama-sanchez-likely-to-be-pm-again-after-catalan-deal>.

9 Aitor Hernández-Morales, "Spain's Feijóo asks Sánchez to let him be prime minister for two years," *Político*, August 30, 2023, <https://www.politico.eu/article/spain-election-alberto-nunez-feijoo-pedro-sanchez-prime-minister-two-years/>.

10 Guy Hedgecore, "Spanish fury at Pedro Sánchez' controversial amnesty plan for power," *BBC News*, November 8, 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-67355299>.

11 "Socialists would win Spain election over conservative PP, poll shows," *Reuters*, September 21, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/socialists-would-win-spain-election-over-conservative-pp-poll-shows-2023-09-21/>.

12 "Spanish PM Sanchez secures another term, ending four-month deadlock," *France 24*, November 16, 2023, <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20231116-%F0%9F%94%B4-spanish-pm-sanchez-wins-parliament-s-backing-for-new-term>.

13 Ashifa Kassam, "The Rock and the hard right: Gibraltar fears rise of Vox in Spanish election," *The Guardian*, July 23, 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jul/23/gibraltar-fears-rise-of-vox-in-spanish-election>.

14 Hedgecore, "Spanish fury at Pedro Sánchez' controversial amnesty plan for power."



settlements for Gibraltar.<sup>15</sup> Because talks between the two had stopped due to the Spanish elections, Gibraltar has stated the need to meet as soon as possible. The former Gibraltar Chief Minister, Fabian Picardo, wanted to start talks in November of 2023.<sup>16</sup> Talks between both groups finally began again in early December 2023.<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, the right-wing People's Party has long rejected Gibraltar's status as a British territory. Former Spanish Foreign Minister Josep Borrell described Brexit as a "golden opportunity" for Spain to reclaim the territory as its own.<sup>18</sup>

Outside of Spain, the UK has also seen political changes due to its elections. In October 2023, the UK held parliamentary elections. While the UK has four major parties, the two most important for this topic are Labour and Conservative.<sup>19</sup> In this election, the Prime Minister of the UK, Rishi Sunak's Conservative Party, was heavily impacted by growing opposition from UK citizens. This has led to a rise in support for the opposing Labour Party. This resulted in the largest overturn of Conservative seats since 1945.<sup>20</sup> Labour party leader Keir Starmer believes that UK voters are open to a change in leadership.<sup>21</sup> This opposition against the UK Conservative Party is due to various factors. These include high inflation rates, economic stagnation, and the inaccessibility of state-run medical services for citizens. When discussing Gibraltar, the Conservative party believes that the wishes of Gibraltarians should always come first.<sup>22</sup>

Former Labour Cabinet Minister Peter Hain said that the UK should work with Spain to share control of Gibraltar. Hain further noted that by sharing sovereignty, Gibraltar would enjoy more freedom and security.<sup>23</sup> However, this solution is not popular with the people of Gibraltar.<sup>24</sup> Delegates should examine how politics shapes the relationship between the UK and Gibraltar. When looking at this small but crucial election, delegates should focus specifically on each party's opinions and previous actions that they have taken.

The final election to consider is that of Gibraltar. On September 12, 2023, Gibraltar called for general elections. The Chief Minister of Gibraltar, Fabien Picardo, has emphasized the importance of his Gibraltar Socialist Labour Party and his motivation to reinforce British sovereignty over the Strait. Picardo underlines that Britain is not putting Gibraltar up for sale to other countries.<sup>25</sup> Issues along the coast, including transporting illegal oil under Spanish law, have prompted the expedition of talks between the UK and Spain.<sup>26</sup> Still, in mid-October 2023, Picardo was elected as the leader of Gibraltar. His main goal is to agree upon a travel flow between Gibraltar and the Schengen passport-free zone.<sup>27</sup>

In the weeks before the election, Picardo met with Spanish leaders to further progress on the shared prosperity zone. This shared zone was created between the Municipality of San Roque and Gibraltar. This zone would allow residents of both

15 Dominic Glover, "Gibraltar faces uncertain future as Spanish election looms," *Courthouse News Service*, July 7, 2023, <https://www.courthousenews.com/gibraltar-faces-uncertain-future-as-spanish-election-looks/>.

16 "CM Congratulates Pedro Sanchez - 804/2023," HM Government of Gibraltar, November 16, 2023, <https://www.gibraltar.gov.gi/press-releases/cm-congratulates-pedro-sanchez-8042023-9407>.

17 John Culatto, "Talks Finally Resume Between Spain And Uk For Eu Treaty To Govern Gibraltar's Post-Brexit Future," *The Olive Press*, December 5, 2023, <https://www.theolivepress.es/spain-news/2023/12/05/talks-finally-resume-between-spain-and-uk-for-eu-treaty-to-govern-gibraltars-post-brexit-future/>.

18 Glover, "Gibraltar faces an uncertain future as Spanish election looms."

19 "Political Groups," Local Government Association, accessed January 20, 2024, <https://www.local.gov.uk/about/our-meetings-and-leadership/political-composition/political-groups>.

20 Elliot Smith, "UK PM Rishi Sunak suffers two historic by-election defeats as Labour opposition surges," *CNBC*, October 20, 2023, <https://www.cnbc.com/2023/10/20/uk-pm-rishi-sunak-suffers-two-historic-by-election-defeats-as-labour-opposition-surges.html>.

21 Elizabeth Piper, "In election year, Labour's Starmer appeals to voters with message of hope," *Reuters*, January 4, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/election-year-labours-starmer-appeals-voters-with-message-hope-2024-01-04/>.

22 "James Cleverly says regardless of outcome of elections, Gibraltar's interests remain top in Treaty talks," *GBC*, October 2, 2023, <https://www.gbc.gi/news/james-cleverly-says-regardless-outcome-elections-gibraltars-interests-remain-top-treaty-talks>.

23 Rowena Mason and Daniel Boffey, "Britain should 'share sovereignty of Gibraltar with Spain' - Peter Hain," *The Guardian*, April 6, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/apr/06/britain-should-share-sovereignty-of-gibraltar-with-spain-peter-hain>.

24 Jon Sharman, "UK should 'share sovereignty of Gibraltar with Spain', says Peter Hain," *Independent*, April 6, 2017, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/uk-spain-gibraltar-share-sovereignty-brexit-talks-cu-peter-hain-europe-minister-labour-referendum-a7669711.html>.

25 "Picardo calls general elections in Gibraltar for next October 12th," *The Diplomat in Spain*, September 13, 2023, <https://thediplomatinspain.com/en/2023/09/picardo-calls-general-elections-in-gibraltar-for-next-october-12th/>.

26 Alyssa McMurty, "Spain protests over 'serious incidents' near Gibraltar," *AA News*, August 30, 2023, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/spain-protests-over-serious-incidents-near-gibraltar/2979140>.

27 Agence France Presse, "Fabian Picardo Narrowly Reelected Leader Of Gibraltar."

regions to work and carry out necessary social activities as easily as possible.<sup>28</sup> Shortly after his election, Picardo created a new initiative that assigned geographical areas of the Rock of Gibraltar to individual ministers to better represent the Gibraltar population, ensuring that each area's needs were adequately met.<sup>29</sup> Delegates should consider how the results of these recent elections will affect future negotiations on the status of Gibraltar. Additionally, it is important to respect the wishes of Gibraltarians regarding the status of their territory regardless of political leadership.

## Post-Brexit deal regarding Gibraltar's relations with the EU

When voting on the issue of Brexit, most Gibraltarians agreed to stay in the EU. On December 31, 2020, before Britain's full exit from the EU, it was agreed by Spain, Britain, and the EU that Gibraltar would remain a part of the EU. This agreement also included Gibraltar in the Schengen area and stated that Spain would police the airport and any ports of entry into Gibraltar.<sup>30</sup> The Schengen Area, which includes most EU countries, guarantees a free flow of movement for civilians. This ensures that civilians passing through the Schengen Area are not subjected to physical border checks between countries.<sup>31</sup>

Post-Brexit relations between Gibraltar and the EU had not been addressed again until now. On October 18, 2023, the United Nations General Assembly urged the Spain and UK governments to reach a final decision on the stable sovereignty

of Gibraltar after Brexit.<sup>32</sup> In November 2023, the UK and Spain proposed a new deal to strengthen Gibraltar's relations with the EU. The main topics discussed in this deal include trade, immigration, and workers' movement to and from Spain.<sup>33</sup> The deal was first reported by Spanish Foreign Minister José Manuel Albares, who met with British Foreign Secretary David Cameron in Brussels.<sup>34</sup>

One of the most important topics that delegates should focus on is the flow of movement and transportation to and from the region. Currently, Gibraltar is no longer a part of the Schengen area, and the current immigration status allows British nationals and any qualifying country passports to enter Gibraltar without a visa for visits.<sup>35</sup> Because of the in-progress negotiations made with Gibraltar's relations with the EU, European countries like Spain have refused entry to Gibraltarians. This is due to the UK's failure to recognize EU ID Cards as valid travel documents.<sup>36</sup> One issue that was addressed in the deal was the policing of the border with Spain. The Spanish government initially proposed a policy encouraging the free movement of people and goods by removing the physical border between Gibraltar and Spain.<sup>37</sup>

However, many citizens are against this proposal and would prefer a physical border.<sup>38</sup> In addition to the physical border removal, Albares suggested that the Gibraltar airport be a priority for the deal. As is, the airport promotes tourism and furthers foreign relations with other states.<sup>39</sup> Delegates should look into a solution for the airport since it can help promote better relations with other states in the EU. In early October

28 "Mayor of San Roque and PSOE Deputy for Cadiz goes to Gibraltar to meet with Picardo," *The Diplomat in Spain*, September 16, 2023, <https://thediplotainSpain.com/en/2023/09/mayor-of-san-roque-and-psoe-deputy-for-cadiz-goes-to-gibraltar-to-meet-with-picardo/>.

29 Gabriella Peralta, "CM vows to 'listen more' as ministerial portfolios announced after Cabinet meeting," *Gibraltar Chronicle*, October 16, 2023, <https://www.chronicle.gi/cm-vows-to-listen-more-as-ministerial-portfolios-announced-after-cabinet-meeting/>.

30 "Spain, Britain close to deal over Gibraltar, Madrid says, but gives no details," *Reuters*, November 28, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/spain-ready-sign-deal-with-britain-gibraltar-early-wednesday-minister-2023-11-28/>.

31 "Schengen Area," European Union, accessed January 7, 2024, [https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/schengen-borders-and-visa/schengen-area\\_en](https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/schengen-borders-and-visa/schengen-area_en).

32 "Fourth Committee Approves Draft Decision on Gibraltar, Resumes General Debate on Information Matters," United Nations General Assembly, October 18, 2023, <https://press.un.org/en/2023/gaspd786.doc.htm>.

33 Lisa O'Carell and Sam Jones, "Spain ready to sign post-Brexit Gibraltar deal, says foreign minister," *The Guardian*, November 28, 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/nov/28/spain-ready-to-sign-post-brexit-gibraltar-deal-says-foreign-minister>.

34 "Spain, Britain close to deal over Gibraltar, Madrid says, but gives no details," *Reuters*, November 28, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/spain-ready-sign-deal-with-britain-gibraltar-early-wednesday-minister-2023-11-28/>.

35 "Gibraltar," UK Government, accessed January 7, 2024, <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/gibraltar/entry-requirements>.

36 "As people refused entry into Spain, border checks draw political flak," *Gibraltar Chronicle*, November 15, 2023, <https://www.chronicle.gi/as-people-refused-entry-into-spain-border-checks-draw-political-flak/>.

37 *Reuters*, "Gibraltar deal hinges on use of airport, says Spain's foreign minister."

38 Andrew Canessa, "Borders, boots, and Brexit: What's behind the Gibraltar and Spain impasse?" *UK in a Changing Europe*, July 28, 2023, <https://ukandeu.ac.uk/borders-boots-and-brexit/>.

39 *Reuters*, "Gibraltar deal hinges on use of airport, says Spain's foreign minister."

2023, UK Conservative ministers expressed concerns about the free movement of people in the proposals outlined by Spain. They worried that it could reduce British influence over the territory.<sup>40</sup> This concern has delayed negotiations related to the Gibraltar airport.<sup>41</sup>

Another crucial aspect of the deal is trade between the EU and Gibraltar. According to the Spanish government, the UK and Spain are eager for a frictionless border regarding the movement of goods. This frictionless border would be similar to Northern Ireland and England, which allows citizens from both countries to walk across the border without a physical customs check.<sup>42</sup> The Spanish ministry also proposed the “zone of shared prosperity.” The zone is a geographic area where countries collaborate to achieve mutual economic growth, development, and well-being. Through this collaboration, the zone specializes in economic policies, trade agreements, and social initiatives.<sup>43</sup> This zone would limit the risks of trading

accommodations in some countries over others to achieve an internal EU market.<sup>44</sup> The UK most likely would agree to this proposal because the zone would provide further economic benefits to Gibraltar, Spain, and the UK.<sup>45</sup>

Even though Gibraltar is a very small territory, it is connected to the rest of the world and vital to international trade. It is also heavily impacted by global events and conflict. In late 2023, the Suez Canal was shut down for business due to the Yemen Houthi rebels attacking ships in response to the Israel and Gaza war. Experts have stated that this will impact North America, Asia, and Europe’s trade routes. Much trade from Asia to North America travels through the Suez Canal and out of Gibraltar.<sup>46</sup> Many shipping companies are instead sending ships around Africa, which can add up to two weeks to a route. Around 90 percent of ships that usually go through the Suez Canal now travel around Africa.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Adam Forrest, “David Cameron wants post-Brexit Gibraltar deal with Spain ‘as soon as possible,’” *Independent*, November 29, 2023, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/brexit-gibraltar-spain-uk-deal-david-cameron-b2454938.html>.

<sup>41</sup> SUR in English, “UK and Spain resume contact in Malaga over Gibraltar deal.”

<sup>42</sup> Jen Kirby, “Brexit’s Irish border problem, explained,” *Vox*, February 18, 2019, <https://www.vox.com/world/2019/2/18/18204269/brexit-irish-border-backstop-explained>.

<sup>43</sup> “Shared Prosperity: Monitoring Inclusive Growth,” World Bank, accessed January 7, 2024, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/brief/global-database-of-shared-prosperity>.

<sup>44</sup> “Internal Market,” European Union, accessed January 7, 2024, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/glossary/internal-market.html>.

<sup>45</sup> Forrest, “David Cameron wants post-Brexit Gibraltar deal with Spain ‘as soon as possible.’”

<sup>46</sup> John Yang and Shoshana Dubnow, “How Houthi attacks on ships in Red Sea are disrupting global trade,” *PBS News*, December 21, 2023, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/how-houthi-attacks-on-ships-in-red-sea-are-disrupting-global-trade>.

<sup>47</sup> Courtney Bonnel and David McHugh, “How attacks on ships in the Red Sea by Yemen’s Houthi rebels are crimping global trade,” *Associated Press*, January 12, 2024, <https://apnews.com/article/red-sea-yemen-houthis-attack-ships-f67d941c260528ac40315ecab4c34ca3>.

Aerial of the Gibraltar Airport  
 Credit: Cabeza2000



Another similar event happened in November 2023, when Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Naqdi, coordinating commander of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps, announced that Iran would close the Mediterranean Sea, which includes the Strait of Gibraltar. Iran has stated that it will close the Mediterranean unless the United States withdraws its support of the Israeli government.<sup>48</sup> It should also be noted that Iran has no direct access to the Mediterranean, which raises questions about how it could be shut down.<sup>49</sup> Still, NATO Operation Sea Guardian and the US Navy's largest and most advanced aircraft carrier, USS Gerald R. Ford, established maritime patrols in the Strait of Gibraltar to avoid further escalation in the area.<sup>50</sup> Both events have reestablished the need for Gibraltar to connect with other large powers, especially in the wake of Brexit. As of January 2024, little progress has been made regarding the deal. Consequently, the Gibraltar Foreign Ministry is preparing for a possible scenario of no treaty or deal agreed upon by Gibraltar, the UK, and Spain.<sup>51</sup>

In the past few months, the Gibraltar government has attempted to re-enter negotiations over its role in a post-Brexit Europe. The lack of progress, combined with real-life events and conflicts that have impacted trade, shows the need to come to a swift conclusion. Delegates in SPECTOL should also look into whether their own country uses trade routes that pass through Gibraltar and how those routes can be strengthened while ensuring Gibraltar's right to self-determination. Next, delegates should work towards finalizing airport, transport, and immigration regulations. The ultimate question is how Gibraltar's status has changed since Brexit and what self-determination looks like in a post-Brexit world.

## Conclusion

Recent world events, including elections and the turmoil surrounding post-Brexit negotiations, have created several

updates to this dispute. The aftermath of Brexit has affected the British territory of Gibraltar's ability to connect with other EU countries. It has also been a significant issue prominent in the region for years. The future of Gibraltar continues to be uncertain as talks continue in the United Nations and between diplomats of the two countries. Failure to reach a clear deal on the relationship between the UK, Spain, and Gibraltar would affect these states, territories, and other parts of the world. While not every country is politically involved in the dispute, many benefit from Gibraltar's strategic location. Thus, many members of SPECTOL are stakeholders in this conflict and should bring an outside perspective to the issue.

Understanding the relationship between Gibraltar and the rest of the EU states is crucial in understanding where Gibraltar stands with both the UK and Spain. Understanding Gibraltar's strategic trade location for the rest of the world is vital. In addition, the recent intense negotiations between the UK and Spain can suggest other ways to ease border control and movement between both countries and Gibraltar. Delegates must consider the changing nature of EU states' relationship with Gibraltar and future talks between the UK and Spain when drafting their solutions. This focus—and a deep understanding of the topic—is necessary to develop effective plans to ensure peace and safety among Gibraltarians and the territory itself.

48 Shoshana Bryen, "Why Won't the US Stop Iranian and Houthi Aggression on Land and Sea?" *The Algemeiner*, January 3, 2024, <https://www.algemeiner.com/2024/01/03/why-wont-the-us-stop-iranian-and-houthi-aggression-on-land-and-sea/>.

49 "Iran threatens Mediterranean closure over Gaza, without saying how," *Reuters*, December 23, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/iran-threatens-mediterranean-closure-over-gaza-without-saying-how-2023-12-23/>.

50 "NATO Operation Sea Guardian concludes successful maritime patrols in the Western Mediterranean and Strait of Gibraltar," NATO Allied Maritime, December 5, 2023, <https://mc.nato.int/media-centre/news/2023/nato-operation-sea-guardian-concludes-successful-maritime-patrols-in-the-western-mediterranean-and-strait-of-gibraltar>.

51 Georgina Cutler, "Gibraltar issues FINAL ultimatum to 'hostile' Spain as Brexit row reaches fever pitch," *GB News*, January 4, 2024, <https://www.gbnews.com/news/world/gibraltar-spain-brexit-row-eu-treaty>.



SPECPOL

NHSMUN 2024

**TOPIC B:**  
**THE EFFECTS OF FOREIGN AID IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA**

Photo Credit: USAID in Africa

## Introduction

In Sub-Saharan Africa, a growing debt crisis threatens economic and political stability. Public debt has surged to USD 1.8 trillion in 2022, a 183 percent increase since 2010, due to factors like the COVID-19 pandemic, the Russia-Ukraine war, and the climate crisis.<sup>1</sup> However, in recent months, there have been several updates to the debt crisis in the region. These include rising political tensions in the country of Niger, as well as the use of financial aid to create sustainable energy sources within Sub-Saharan Africa.

A recent rise of political instability in Niger has created a new set of challenges for the government. These include a dependency on aid, new levels of corruption, and the breakdown of local industries. Currently, Niger acts as a significant part of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), but the turmoil may require it to seek new allies in the region. By working with countries such as Algeria, Egypt, or Morocco, Niger can be better situated to manage the conflict. Overall, the situation in Niger shows the importance of financial aid as a means to create regional stability and prevent conflict.

Over the last 20 years, China has contributed over USD 170 billion to the region.<sup>2</sup> Most of this is in the form of loans, with about half hidden from debt records. This has raised transparency concerns and caused anti-Chinese sentiment in the region. Politicians in Ghana, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and other countries have exploited and continue to use this sentiment for political gain. However, China has also begun to fund many sustainable energy projects.<sup>3</sup> These have ranged from solar panel farms to grants or other incentives. This has led to a debate on promoting sustainable development while preventing the spread of Chinese influence in the region.

## The Result of Exploitative Foreign Aid in Niger

On July 26, 2023, Niger's government was overthrown by a

coup d'état. This was led by General Abdourahamane Tchiani, who took President Mohamed Bazoum hostage and took control of his new government. After the coup, ECOWAS stated that it would take military action and cease relations with Niger unless Bazoum was restored to power. These actions would isolate Niger from other countries and harm its economy. The crisis has put a large amount of pressure on the global community. While many states support humanitarian aid, leaders are less sure about giving funds to Niger. Leaders view the government as politically unstable.<sup>4</sup> Many groups have a strong interest in a stable Niger. The country has a strategic location and resources, which is important to many other countries. All of this has drawn global attention to the crisis.

There are a lot of other groups, countries, or individuals who have a stake in Niger's economy. This is due to its unique location in North, West, and Central Africa and its many resources. For example, France, which has 1,500 troops in Niger, faces accusations of destabilizing the country. This is due to its colonial history.<sup>5</sup> The United States, with 1,100 troops, disapproves of the junta's governance. A junta can be defined as a military or political group that has seized power in a government through force. This is often through a coup d'état or similar action. As a result, the United States has placed sanctions on specific aid programs in Niger.<sup>6</sup> The coup could also shift geopolitical alliances, as supporters of the Tchiani

1 "Unlocking the Development Potential of Public Debt in Sub-Saharan Africa," The World Bank, December 15, 2023, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/results/2023/12/15/unlocking-the-development-potential-of-public-debt-in-sub-saharan-africa>.

2 "The World Bank in China," The World Bank, accessed January 20, 2024, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/china/overview>.

3 Mitota P. Omolere, "China's Renewable Energy Empire in Africa: Lifeline or Debt Trap?" EarthOrg, September 27, 2023, <https://earth.org/chinas-renewable-energy-empire-in-africa-lifeline-or-debt-trap/>.

4 Gilles Yabi, "The Niger Coup's Outsized Global Impact," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, August 31, 2023, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2023/08/31/niger-coup-s-outsized-global-impact-pub-90463>.

5 "Last French troops leave Niger as military cooperation officially ends," Reuters, December 22, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/last-french-troops-leave-niger-military-cooperation-officially-ends-2023-12-22/>.

6 Reuters, "Last French troops leave Niger as military cooperation officially ends."

regime have shown they may have potential ties with Russia.<sup>7</sup> In the past, the relationship between Russia and Niger was mainly based on the economy. However, the coup created an opportunity for a new political relationship.<sup>8</sup>

The coup's impact has extended to the European Union (EU) states, particularly Germany and Italy. Both of these states had troops and interests in Niger, which were related to anti-migration efforts. France had a similar issue trying to cut ties with the Niger government. Since July, many countries in Europe, including both Germany and France, have stopped sending aid to Niger.<sup>9</sup> The coup has also challenged France's influence in the Sahel. It ended defense agreements and marked the conclusion of diplomatic relations between France and Niger.<sup>10</sup> This was due to France exploiting the country's natural resources. The junta of Niger has noted the unequal

economic relationship of uranium extraction. This has caused a large amount of discontent with the junta. The junta has seen its diplomatic relationship with France as a repeat of colonialism and the European exploitation of its natural resources.<sup>11</sup>

France's reliance on uranium from Niger shows the long history of unequal trade between both Africa and Europe.<sup>12</sup> This has furthered Europe's blame for the environmental and health hazards in African states entwined in the mining industry.<sup>13</sup> Many European countries have engaged in uranium mining in Africa as a part of their nuclear energy programs. The extraction and processing of uranium ore can lead to environmental and human health hazards. This is especially true if mining is not conducted with proper regulations and safeguards.<sup>14</sup>

7 Chinedu Asadu, "In coup-hit West Africa, regional leaders recognize Niger's junta but seek fast return to democracy," *AP News*, December 10, 2023, <https://apnews.com/article/ecowas-west-africa-nigeria-tinubu-niger-76eafe982f93983e6278b21beeb0678b>.

8 "Russia and Niger agree to develop military ties, Moscow says," *Reuters*, January 16, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/world/russia-niger-agree-develop-military-ties-moscow-says-2024-01-16/>.

9 "Niger loses aid as Western countries condemn coup," *NBC News*, July 29, 2023, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/niger-military-coup-aid-european-union-us-blinken-france-uranium-rcna97046>.

10 "UN pledges to 'remain engaged and committed' amid attempted coup in Niger," United Nations, July 28, 2023, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/07/1139247>.

11 "Guterres condemns apparent coup attempt in Niger," United Nations, July 26, 2023,

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/07/1139127>.

12 Assma Maad, "How dependent is France on Niger's uranium?" *Le Monde*, August 4, 2023, [https://www.lemonde.fr/en/les-decodeurs/article/2023/08/04/how-dependent-is-france-on-niger-s-uranium\\_6080772\\_8.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/en/les-decodeurs/article/2023/08/04/how-dependent-is-france-on-niger-s-uranium_6080772_8.html).

13 Ljubica Zupunski et al., "Environmental exposure to uranium in a population living in close proximity to gold mine tailings in South Africa," *Journal of Trace Elements in Medicine and Biology* 77, no. 127141 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jtemb.2023.127141>.

14 Ishaan Tharoor, "The coup in Niger puts spotlight on nation's uranium," *The Washington Post*, August 1, 2023, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/08/01/uranium-niger-france-coup/>.

Nigerien army soldiers

Credit: U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Michael Larson



In recent months, Niger has faced a major obstacle with the discovery of oil. This has attracted outside interest and support from other nations, including China.<sup>15</sup> This is due to Chinese companies financing and leading oil extraction projects. However, the coup has created doubts about future oil extraction and revenue management. Projects have been halted due to sanctions by ECOWAS and neighboring states. These have impacted Niger's immediate conditions and worsened Niger and China's relationship.<sup>16</sup> This, combined with many states pulling aid, can transform the landscape of Niger.

As it stands, the current situation in Niger is critical. ECOWAS has given the junta an ultimatum to restore a democratic government. Nigeria, which is a regional power, is taking a leading role in ECOWAS decisions about Niger. This is due to concerns about potential coups in neighboring states, including Nigeria.<sup>17</sup> The current President of Nigeria, Bola Tinubu, has pushed more states to become militarily involved in the region's conflict. This viewpoint is partly driven by a need to show legitimacy amid recent election challenges. Nigeria is also very keen on a democratic Niger because of their shared border. This shared border increases the risk of conflict from Niger spreading to Nigeria. Both countries have a history of working with other regional states on security issues. A breakdown in this cooperation could lead to more security threats and refugee issues in northern Nigeria. Despite Nigeria's influence in the region, worsening economic conditions in the country could lead to a loss in citizen support for direct intervention in Niger.<sup>18</sup>

Nigeria's large influence in ECOWAS makes it a key player in

taking on regional initiatives. Other ECOWAS states might support military intervention in Niger, as they view it as a way to prevent coups in their own country. However, it is crucial to note that Nigerians, dealing with their security issues across multiple regions, may prioritize fixing domestic problems over foreign concerns.<sup>19</sup> President Tinubu's recent policy changes have led to many economic problems within Nigeria. These have included the removal of fuel subsidies and changes in foreign exchange rate policies.<sup>20</sup> The war in Ukraine has also impacted Nigeria. This has led to higher food prices and an inflation rate of 22.79 percent. Military intervention in Niger could worsen these economic conditions, making it a less appealing option for the Nigerian people.<sup>21</sup>

Nigeria also faces a large number of security threats inside its borders. These include the remnants of Boko Haram, bandits, threats from separatist groups, and piracy.<sup>22</sup> Without aid from other countries, some Nigerians would view an intervention in Niger as using resources that Nigeria does not have. Some other ECOWAS members, including Burkina Faso and Mali, are also interested in the outcome of an intervention. This is because they are both currently under military juntas.<sup>23</sup> Some non-state actors or NGOs have also stated interest in the coup in Niger. One example of these groups is the Wagner Group. The Wagner Group, known for its connections to Russian foreign policy, adds another layer of complexity. The Wagner Group has expressed willingness to support the regime in Niger, raising questions about Russia's broader interests in the region.<sup>24</sup>

In finding potential solutions, delegates should seek support or aid from other regional powers or groups. Delegates are

15 Yabi, "The Niger Coup's Outsized Global Impact."

16 "Niger government asks court to force ECOWAS to lift coup sanctions," *Al Jazeera*, November 22, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/11/22/niger-asks-west-africas-court-to-compel-neighbors-to-lift-coup-sanctions-citing-hardship>.

17 Nnamdi Obasi, "ECOWAS, Nigeria and the Niger Coup Sanctions: Time to Recalibrate," International Crisis Group, December 5, 2023, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/sahel/niger/ecowas-nigeria-and-niger-coup-sanctions-time-recalibrate>.

18 Hédi Nsaibia, "Fact Sheet: Military Coup in Niger," The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, August 3, 2023, <https://acleddata.com/2023/08/03/fact-sheet-military-coup-in-niger/>.

19 Oluwatimilehin Sotubo, "ECOWAS: In Need of Help in Niger?" RAND Corporation, August 25, 2023, <https://www.rand.org/pubs/commentary/2023/08/ecowas-in-need-of-help-in-niger.html>.

20 "Niger coup underlines challenge to democracy across West Africa," *Chatham House*, August 18, 2023, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2023/08/niger-coup-underlines-challenge-democracy-across-west-africa>.

21 Jamie Levin and Nathan Allen, "How U.N. Peacekeeping Accidentally Fuels Africa's Coups," *Foreign Policy*, August 30, 2023, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/08/30/united-nations-peacekeeping-africa-coup-niger/>.

22 Stephanie Huber, *Nigeria Security Situation* (Washington, D.C.: European Asylum Support Office, 2021), <https://www.justice.gov/eoir/page/file/1405116/download>.

23 "Burkina Faso, Mali warn against military intervention in Niger," *Al Jazeera*, August 1, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/8/1/burkina-faso-and-mali-warn-against-foreign-intervention-after-niger-coup>.

24 Christopher Faulkner, Raphael Parens, Marcel Plichta, "After Prigozhin: The Future of the Wagner Model in Africa," Combating Terrorism Center, September 2023, <https://ctc.westpoint.edu/after-prigozhin-the-future-of-the-wagner-model-in-africa/>.



encouraged to look into groups that are geographically close to Niger. States should look into giving more power to ECOWAS as a potential alternative to other sources of aid. This may include collaboration with countries such as Algeria, Egypt, or South Africa, which could empower the group more through this crisis. An approach backed by regional allies, which could include the African Union or the United Nations, would increase the chances of restoring democracy in Niger. The importance of collective action should be emphasized. The role of financial aid in the situation should also be addressed, as many EU countries are currently denying aid until the situation is resolved.

## Foreign Investment in Sustainable Development in Sub-Saharan Africa

In recent years, many states in Sub-Saharan Africa have been undergoing a transition of their main energy sources.<sup>25</sup> Despite housing about 20 percent of the world's population and its large amount of resources, Africa still only makes up about two percent of the world's clean energy spending.<sup>26</sup> This means that while there is a large interest in having more sustainable energy sources in Africa, countries are not given much money for these projects. The United Nations defines renewable energy as energy gathered from natural sources. These sources replenish sooner than they are used.<sup>27</sup> This may include solar, wind, or hydroelectricity.<sup>28</sup> Despite Africa having 60 percent of the world's best locations for solar energy, it creates only 1 percent of its solar power. In recent months, many countries in

Sub-Saharan Africa have adopted sustainable energy projects. For example, in Ghana, officials have created a floating solar farm to help create renewable energy. This farm uses sun energy, reflecting it onto the water.<sup>29</sup>

However, a project like the Ghanaian solar farm is often only possible with foreign investment or aid.<sup>30</sup> In recent months, China has become more active in providing aid to renewable energy projects. As mentioned throughout the background guide, China is a significant lender of foreign aid to Sub-Saharan African countries. However, much of this foreign aid has been provided as loans that require the Sub-Saharan African recipient countries to repay China. China heavily favors lending for infrastructure projects, such as its Belt Road Initiative, which has invested in over 150 countries since 2013.<sup>31</sup>

Loans given by China to African states are often not made through public tendering processes.<sup>32</sup> Tendering may be defined as when a group or government bids for a contract for a project.<sup>33</sup> Advocates argue that not going through the public tendering process leads to corruption. This is especially true with countries that have weak governments.<sup>34</sup> As of late 2023, China was Africa's fourth biggest energy investor, which is a decrease from pre-pandemic numbers.<sup>35</sup> When giving aid to energy projects, China has changed tactics from loans to more stable investments in energy.<sup>36</sup> In recent months, China has provided funding for both renewable energy projects and critical mineral extraction projects, which could include cobalt or lithium. The Chinese government hopes these projects will

25 "Doubling energy investment in Africa requires urgent action to bring down financing costs and boost access to capital," International Energy Agency, September 6, 2023, <https://www.iea.org/news/doubling-energy-investment-in-africa-requires-urgent-action-to-bring-down-financing-costs-and-boost-access-to-capital>.

26 International Energy Agency, "Doubling energy investment in Africa requires urgent action to bring down financing costs and boost access to capital."

27 "What is Renewable Energy," United Nations, accessed January 15, 2024, <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/what-is-renewable-energy>.

28 United Nations, "What is Renewable Energy."

29 Shirley Ze Yu, "China has quietly joined Africa's renewable energy revolution," London School of Economics, August 30, 2023, <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/africaatlse/2023/08/30/china-has-quietly-joined-africas-renewable-energy-revolution/>.

30 Ze Yu, "China has quietly joined Africa's renewable energy revolution."

31 Kathleen J. Brown, "Why hide? Africa's unreported debt to China," *The Review of International Organizations* (October 2023), <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11558-023-09513-4>.

32 Jana De Kluiver, "Navigating the complex terrain of China-Africa debt relations," Institute for Security Studies, November 2, 2023, <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/navigating-the-complex-terrain-of-china-africa-debt-relations>.

33 Will Kenton, "Tender in Finance Definition: How it works, With Example," Investopedia, October 26, 2023, <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/t/tender.asp>.

34 De Kluiver, "Navigating the complex terrain of China-Africa debt relations."

35 Charlie Mitchell, "China replaces African loans with energy investments amid faltering economy," S&P Global Insights, October 12, 2023, <https://www.spglobal.com/commodityinsights/en/market-insights/latest-news/oil/101223-feature-china-replaces-african-loans-with-energy-investments-amid-faltering-economy>.

36 Mitchell, "China replaces African loans with energy investments amid faltering economy."



An example of aid provided on the continent  
 Credit: Andrewsزابو

lead to a global energy transition.<sup>37</sup>

China often requires that Chinese companies lead the projects it invests in Sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>38</sup> While it may be understandable that a country would want to lead its projects, doing so limits the benefits for Sub-Saharan Africa. This causes unemployment rates to increase in the countries the projects are supposed to help.<sup>39</sup> In contrast, China benefits from the repayment of loans while also employing Chinese workers in these jobs. This ultimately benefits China and its economy. On the other hand, these factors often worsen Sub-Saharan Africa's economic situation.<sup>40</sup> New measures should be created soon to prevent debt trapping. These may include new international laws on transparency, fair regulations, improved debt management, and increased research. All of these are recommended to address Africa's complex debt challenge and ensure equity among all groups in the foreign aid process.

As a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Chinese government has lowered the amount of aid they provide to Sub-Saharan Africa. Issues with countries repaying debt, as well as new economic problems in China, have caused Chinese investments to be reduced from USD 28.5 billion in 2016 to under USD one billion in 2022.<sup>41</sup> This has been the lowest investment made by China in 20 years. According to reports on the BRI, experts guess that China has changed their loan system to more loans that are smaller amounts, as well as loans that have more benefits for the environment or social causes.<sup>42</sup>

Despite China's declining economy and changing foreign aid commitment to Sub-Saharan Africa, China is still investing in new energy projects. In August 2023, China invested USD 30 million through a grant and emergency equipment to assist with the energy crisis in South Africa.<sup>43</sup> Also, China's long-term investments in increasing the total gas reserves in Africa

37 Kyle Hiebert, "The Fight Over Critical Minerals Has Just Begun," CIGI, November 27, 2023, <https://www.cigionline.org/articles/the-fight-over-critical-minerals-has-just-begun/>.

38 S. I. Gilpin, "China, Africa and the International Aid System: A Challenge to (the Norms Underpinning) the Neoliberal World Order?" *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 58, no. 3 (2023): 277-297, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00219096211063804>.

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resulted in an increase from 3.44 trillion cubic feet in 2003 to 22.52 trillion cubic feet as of October 12, 2023.<sup>44</sup> It will be interesting to watch how China's foreign aid commitment to Sub-Saharan Africa continues to change in the future. China's approach is changing, and Sub-Saharan Africa must evaluate how they will be affected.

Still, the decline of Chinese funding concerns many who want a "greener" Africa. This is especially true when considering how little other countries invest in the region's energy future.<sup>45</sup> A report by the International Energy Agency (IEA) found that greater access to capital is necessary to increase clean energy for countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. The IEA stated that financially supporting African investments is more expensive than in advanced economies. This means that investing in African energy is seen as less profitable than other regions.<sup>46</sup> Between 2012 and 2023, only four states gave the most energy funding to Africa.<sup>47</sup> These states included China, France, Italy, and the United States. The World Bank also gave most of its energy funding to Africa.<sup>48</sup> By creating incentives for states to invest in renewable energy, they can help to create energy independence in Africa. China has also used energy projects to create new regional political allies. In June 2023, China and Ethiopia announced the creation of a new research center about renewable energy.<sup>49</sup> Since 2011, China has invested over USD four billion in the country.<sup>50</sup>

One solution that can be considered is building a strong, sustainable energy infrastructure in Sub-Saharan Africa without using private loans. This would help to improve these countries' economies. Not only would the presence of this infrastructure have immediate economic benefits in the short term, but it would also improve the economy in the long term. Sustainable energy would allow the region to produce

more goods and complete new projects.<sup>51</sup> To address multiple problems simultaneously, local Sub-Saharan African labor should be used in building this energy infrastructure to further improve local economies, reduce unemployment, provide local workers with jobs, and help transition more of the Sub-Saharan African workforce into higher-skilled jobs.<sup>52</sup> This would address many issues Sub-Saharan Africa faces, resulting in more sustainable solutions.

This issue also raises the question of whether developing countries should sacrifice their industrial growth in consideration of climate change and global warming. Even though developed countries largely created this problem, it should be considered.<sup>53</sup> The role of China should also be considered in Africa's energy future. Delegates should consider if more countries should be involved in the investment process in the region or if the existing loan system should be changed or restructured. Countless other possible solutions could help Sub-Saharan African countries, and delegates should be prepared to discuss solutions that their country would be most likely to support. Delegates should also prepare to argue why the solutions their country would not support might not be the best solutions for Sub-Saharan Africa.

## Conclusion

The above examples of foreign aid in Sub-Saharan Africa, including the conflict in Niger or the role of China in energy, are not the only two problems the region faces. The current African foreign aid system is an ongoing issue, impacting many states and people. Because of its widespread impact, it is important to address this issue and find ways to better manage foreign aid in the future. The ultimate goal should be

<sup>44</sup> Mitchell, "China replaces African loans with energy investments amid a faltering economy."

<sup>45</sup> Javier Blas, "What Happened to Africa Rising? It's Been Another Lost Decade," *Bloomberg*, September 12, 2023, <https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/features/2023-09-12/africa-s-lost-decade-economic-pain-underlies-sub-saharan-coups/>.

<sup>46</sup> International Energy Agency, "Doubling energy investment in Africa requires urgent action."

<sup>47</sup> Moses Oyintarelado, "Who Finances Energy Projects in Africa?" Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, November 27, 2023, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2023/11/27/who-finances-energy-projects-in-africa-pub-91070>.

<sup>48</sup> Moses, "Who Finances Energy Projects in Africa?"

<sup>49</sup> Yunus Kemp, "Ethiopia, China set up centre to develop renewable energy potential," *ESI Africa*, June 27, 2023, <https://www.esi-africa.com/research-and-development/ethiopia-china-set-up-centre-to-develop-renewable-energy-potential/>.

<sup>50</sup> Mitota P. Omolere, "China's Renewable Energy Empire in Africa: Lifeline or Debt Trap?"

<sup>51</sup> "Improving energy access key to meeting development goals in Africa," UNCTAD, March 21, 2023, <https://unctad.org/news/improving-energy-access-key-meeting-development-goals-africa>.

<sup>52</sup> Jacques Morisset, "To reduce South Africa's unemployment, make work more attractive," Brookings Institute, October 13, 2023, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/to-reduce-south-africas-unemployment-make-work-more-attractive/>.

<sup>53</sup> Morisset, "To reduce South Africa's unemployment, make work more attractive."

to reduce corruption, have more transparency, and reduce the need for foreign aid in the first place.

By creating solutions for each of the above issue areas, delegates can successfully address an often overlooked problem. Continuing to ignore foreign aid leads to a waste of resources and money and, most importantly, harms citizens of the region. The effect of Sub-Saharan Africa's economic situation on its citizens is clear; almost 50 percent of all poor people live in Sub-Saharan Africa. "Poor people" here is defined by experiencing 33.3 percent or more of "all weighted deprivations," such as lack of housing or proper nutrition.<sup>54</sup> Delegates must address many problems to achieve sustainable solutions in Sub-Saharan Africa, including vocational education, transparent and accountable government, the debt crisis, political stability, and sustainable, equitable, economic, and industrial development. Without addressing the above, Sub-Saharan Africa will continue to suffer from the negative use of foreign aid.

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<sup>54</sup> United Nations Development Programme and Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, *Global Multidimensional Poverty Index 2023* (Oxford: United Nations Development Programme and Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, 2023), <https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents/hdp-document/2023mpireportenpdf.pdf>.

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