Debating Global Governance: “Model UNPO” role play

This activity engages students with issues facing some of the most marginalised communities in the world and enthuses them about how we can think differently about equality and diversity in the global governance system. It addresses key sections of the A-level in Geography (e.g. on global interdependence, inequality, injustice, diversity, citizenship. See Appendix I), and offers an opportunity for the development of public speaking, debating and self-confidence.¹

Associated materials:

- Debating Global Governance Student Sheet
- Debating Global Governance Student follow up sheet
- Model UNPO Set up documents

Equipment

- UNPO Member and President desk signs (from ‘Set up documents’)  
- Timing cards (from ‘Set up documents’)  
- Pens and paper  
- Tables and chairs

Introduction to the activity

The state has come to dominate understandings of geopolitics: political maps of the world consist of neatly coloured-in state units, and state leaders dominate international headlines. However, those who are most acutely affected by conflict, human rights abuses and environmental injustices are often not represented by state interests. In many cases they seek to represent themselves on the international stage, as stateless nations (e.g. Tibet) as indigenous communities (e.g. Crimean Tatars) as minorities (e.g. Kurds in Iran) or as de facto states (e.g. Somaliland). Over 40 of these non-state actors have come together as the ‘Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization’ (UNPO; www.unpo.org). This activity brings the issues faced by these non-state actors into secondary school classrooms.

¹ These materials have been developed by Dr Fiona McConnell and Dr Liam Saddington (School of Geography and the Environment, University of Oxford), and the UNPO Secretariat. Funding for trialling these materials was provided by a Ray Y Gildea Jr Award from the Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers) and Dr McConnell’s British Academy Mid-Career Fellowship (2016).
The activity enables teachers to run role-play debating exercises on issues of environmental justice, human rights and conflict resolution. The exercises will be loosely based on Model UN simulations but instead of students being assigned roles as representatives of states and enacting UN meetings they will be designated roles as representatives of stateless nations, indigenous peoples and minority communities. Students will research their assigned non-state actor in advance of the class, and will then come together to simulate a debate of the UNPO’s General Assembly based on pre-established rules of procedure.

1-2 weeks before the session:

Allocate students into pairs/ small groups and assign each group a UNPO member from the following list:

- Abkhazia
- Acheh
- Crimean Tatars
- East Turkestan
- Guam
- Iranian Kurdistan (PDKI)
- Khmer Krom
- Ogaden
- Somaliland
- Southern Mongolia
- Taiwan
- Tibet

In advance of the session, explain the nature of the exercise, how the debate will be run and what the students will be expected to do. In advance of the debate each UNPO member group will need to prepare: a fact-sheet, a 2-minute speech, and three draft clauses for a resolution. The teacher needs to prepare a skeleton resolution based on these draft clauses and should be on hand to answer questions from the participants regarding their preparation.

When assigning the UNPO members it is worth considering the geographic spread (see Map in Appendix II).

Ask each group to prepare a one-page fact sheet on the UNPO member that they have been assigned. This will serve as a reference resource during the debate and can be circulated amongst all students afterwards as reference material from the activity. The fact sheet should include:

1) Location, territory and neighbours
2) Recent history and political environment
3) Economic Situation
4) What your polity is aspiring for e.g. independent statehood, autonomy within another state, greater cultural and political rights.
5) Obstacles to good governance
6) Opportunities for stability and development

Suggested resources for each UNPO member are listed in Appendix III.
Each group should also prepare a short **two-minute speech** about the member they are representing and should submit **three draft clauses** for a resolution prior to the lesson. Draft clauses should cover issues such as: human rights, environmental issues, development, political rights etc (see Learner Activity Sheet). The teacher might decide to focus on particular issues and direct the UNPO members, accordingly, perhaps linked to the curriculum. During the debate, students will be able to debate, amend and then vote on clauses.

The teacher should select three draft clauses from the submissions that cover a range of issues. It is worth having a couple in reserve in case students are particularly quick during their debates. This will form the skeleton resolution (see Appendix V). It is also worth having additional clauses in case the debate moves quickly.

Examples might include:

- Unrepresented communities are often disproportionately affected by violence and therefore should be key players in conflict resolution mechanisms
- Unrepresented communities should have as equal a say on environmental justice issues as nation states
- Unrepresented communities challenge the sovereignty and territorial integrity of nation states
- The global governance system should develop mechanisms for including unrepresented communities in decision making over development issues.

**During the debate (2 hours):**

The teacher takes on the role of UNPO President and oversees the debate. Their role is:

- To open and close the debate
- To maintain order during the session
- To determine which speaker will have the right to speak and decide on the amount of time that each speaker may hold the floor
- To call a delegate to order if their remarks are not relevant to the topic under discussion
- To submit a subject or proposal to a vote and direct the voting procedure
- To announce decisions

After the President opens the session, each group representing a UNPO member is given two minutes to present their initial statement. There will then be a moderated debate, chaired by the President, focusing on the clauses that the students submitted in advance. The students are aiming to produce a resolution which should, if possible, be agreed through consensus. The skeleton resolution, based on the clauses submitted by student groups in advance should be displayed or printed and circulated.

Suggested rules of procedure for the moderated debate:

a) No delegate may address the floor during the moderated debate without first obtaining the permission of the President (by **raising their hand**)

b) The President shall maintain a **speakers’ list** for the topic under discussion. Delegates may petition the President (raise their hand) to be placed on the speakers’ list. The President will call upon delegates in the order they signify their desire to speak
c) **Time limits** for contributions from delegates may be set by the President. It is at the President’s discretion to cut short these speeches to allow for other delegates to contribute.

d) If the discussion addresses a particular subject, the President can bring to order a speaker whose remarks do not pertain to that subject.

e) Attacks of a personal nature, or against a particular nation, are prohibited.

f) At the discretion of the President, a delegate so attacked may be granted an immediate Right of Reply.

Voting on clauses to be included in the resolution

a) Each UNPO member shall have **one vote**.

b) Votes on clauses of the resolution require a simple majority (greater than 50 percent) to pass, expressed by a raising of hands.

A break should be scheduled mid-way through the debate, with students encouraged to stay ‘in role’ and interact with other delegations in the room. They might use this time to forge alliances, ask how other delegations are going to vote, and discuss strategy.

**After the debate:**

It is useful to have time to discuss the simulation with the group directly after the debate. Questions to reflect on may include:

- Why have certain groups and communities been marginalised from global politics?
- What challenges do unrepresented nations and peoples face because they are not recognised states?
- What are the similarities and differences in the experiences of UNPO members e.g. around human rights, economic and cultural rights, environmental justice?
- What can the issues faced by UNPO members tell us about equality and diversity in the global governance system?
- Should there be definite rules for determining what constitutes a state? And, if yes, what should they be? Or should decisions about statehood be considered on a case by case basis?
Appendix I: Connections to A-level Geography specifications

AQA: Global Systems and Global Governance:

3.2.1.2 - Global systems - “unequal power relations enable some states to drive global systems to their own advantage and to directly influence geopolitical events, while others are only able to respond or resist in a more constrained way.”

3.2.1.4 - Global governance - “The emergence and developing role of norms, laws and institutions in regulating and reproducing global systems. Issues associated with attempts at global governance, including how:

• agencies, including the UN in the post-1945 era, can work to promote growth and stability but may also exacerbate inequalities and injustices

• interactions between the local, regional, national, international and global scales are fundamental to understanding global governance

OCR: Topic 2.2 Global Connections:

Option C – Human Rights

3. What are the strategies for global governance of human rights?

Option D- Power and Borders

1. What is meant by sovereignty and territorial integrity?

1.a. The world political map of sovereign nation-states is dynamic.

• Definitions of state, nation, sovereignty and territorial integrity and how they are fundamental in understanding the world political map.

• Understand the terms of norms, intervention and geopolitics and how they are fundamental in appreciating that sovereignty and territorial integrity are complex issues.

2. What are the contemporary challenges to sovereign state authority?

2.a. A multitude of factors pose challenges to sovereignty and territorial integrity.

• Erosion of sovereignty and loss of territorial integrity are influenced by economic, political, social and environmental factors, including the challenges of:

• current political boundaries

• political dominance of ethnic groups.

• Case study of one country in which sovereignty has been challenged, including:

• causes and challenges to the government

• impacts on people and places.

3. How effective is global governance of sovereignty and territorial integrity?

4.a. Global governance of sovereignty and territorial integrity has consequences for citizens and places.
How the global governance of sovereignty issues has consequences for citizens and places, including short term effects, such as humanitarian aid, and longer term effects, such as changes in political regime.

- How the global governance of territorial integrity issues has consequences for citizens and places, including short term effects, such as maintaining peace, and longer term effects, such as trade relationships.

- Case study of the impact of global governance of sovereignty or territorial integrity in one LIDC to illustrate and explain:
  - the sovereignty or territorial integrity issue/issues
  - the global governance strategy/strategies used
  - opportunities for stability, growth and development
  - challenges of inequality and injustices

**Edexcel:**

**Area of study 4: Human Systems and Geopolitics**

**8B: Migration, Identity and Sovereignty**

**Enquiry Question 2:** How are nation states defined and how have they evolved in a globalising world?

Nation states are highly varied and have very different histories.

b. Many national borders are a consequence of physical geography and historical development; other borders are a result of colonial history and might not take account of different ethnic or religious groups (Iraq or Rwanda), which can lead to problems of sovereignty and legitimacy.

**8B.12** There are consequences of disunity within nations.

There are strong nationalist movements seeking to create independent, smaller states whilst remaining within larger trading groups (Catalonia or Scotland in the EU).

The role of the state is variable and national identity is not always strong, especially in ‘failed states’ where there are stark differences between the politically and economically powerful elite, foreign investment groups and the wider population.

**WJEC A Level:**

**3.2: Global Governance: Change and Challenges**

**3.2.4 Causes, consequences, and management of refugee movements**

- Causes of international refugee movements and internal displacement of people (Internally Displaced People), including geopolitical events driven by powerful states and economic injustice, such as 'land grabs'
- Consequences of these movements on the lives of refugees and their destinations including lives of people in neighbouring states and developed economies
Appendix II: Map of UNPO members
Appendix III: Suggested resources for UNPO members

Abkhazia
UNPO Summary: http://unpo.org/members/7854

Guardian article about Georgia’s response to a Russian-Abkhazia military agreement: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/nov/25/georgia-russia-abkhazia-military-agreement-putin

BBC profile of Abkhazia: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-18175030

Vice article about Abkhazia 20 years after it broke away from Georgia: https://news.vice.com/article/abkhazia-is-yet-another-country-that-doesnt-exist

Achheh
UNPO Summary: http://unpo.org/members/7786

Brief history of Aceh: https://www.etan.org/estafeta/01/winter/6aceh.htm


Crimean Tartars
UNPO Summary: http://unpo.org/members/7871

BBC Profile of Crimea: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-18287223

Crimean Tatar Resource Centre: https://ctrcenter.org/en/o-krymskih-tatarah

East Turkestan
UNPO Summary: https://unpo.org/members/7872

BBC Article: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-china-45474279

World Uyghur Congress: https://www.uyghurcongress.org/en/

Uyghur Human Rights Project: https://uhrp.org/

Guam
UNPO Summary: https://unpo.org/members/22106

BBC Article: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-16517384
Washington Post Article: https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/some-in-guam-push-for-independence-from-us-as-marines-prepare-for-buildup/2016/06/16/e6152bd2-324b-11e6-ab9d-1da2b0f24f93_story.html

Iranian Kurdistan (PDKI)

UNPO Summary: http://unpo.org/members/7882


Article about Iranian Kurdistan: https://thekurdishproject.org/kurdistan-map/iranian-kurdistan/

Khmer Krom

UNPO Summary: http://unpo.org/members/7887

Khmers Kampuchea-Krom Federation Website: http://khmerkrom.org/

Minority Rights Group International profile of Khmer Krom: https://minorityrights.org/minorities/khmer/

Ogaden

UNPO Summary: http://unpo.org/members/10714

Ogaden National Liberation Front: http://onlf.org/


Somaliland:

UNPO Summary: http://unpo.org/members/7916

Fact sheet from the BBC: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-14115069

BBC news article covering history of Somaliland and contemporary situation: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-36300592


Southern Mongolia

UNPO Summary: http://unpo.org/members/7883

Website of Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Centre: http://www.smhric.org/
Taiwan

UNPO Summary: http://unpo.org/members/7908
Taipei Times: http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/
BBC Country Profile: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-16164639
China-Taiwan Relations: https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/china-taiwan-relations

Tibet:

UNPO Summary: http://unpo.org/members/7879
BBC Profile of Tibet: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-16689779
Central Tibetan Administration: http://tibet.net/
Appendix IV: Additional resources

http://www.economist.com/node/324795

https://americandiplomacy.web.unc.edu/1999/09/revising-the-u-n-trusteeship-system-will-it-work/


UN, The United Nations and Decolonization:
https://www.un.org/dppa/decolonization/en

UN, The United Nations and Decolonization Documents

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights:  
*General Comment No.12*, the right to self-determination of peoples (Art. 1), 1984:  

*General Recommendation No. 21*, right to self-determination, 1996:  
http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/gencomm/genrexii.htm

UNPO on self-determination: http://www.unpo.org/section/2/2

UNPO Membership http://unpo.org/members.php
Appendix V: Example Resolution

Resolution adopted by the UNPO General Assembly

Unrepresented organisations and polities are overlooked in national and international decision making and have little influence or power in negotiations. This has resulted in the unfair treatment by governments in terms of human rights abuses to their peoples; unequal allocation of resources and basic services within the territories of unrepresented communities, and a lack of political representation. The UNPO...

1. *Calls for* governments to engage in fair discussions, with equal legal representation and negotiating power, and involving independent bodies, with unrepresented communities over the ownership and distribution of important resources

2. *Demands* the United Nations to investigate and take action against instances of human rights violations within an allocated time scale against unrepresented groups, or the state in question face relevant sanctions

3. *Encourages* all relevant organisations approved by the United Nations to take grassroots action on improving unrepresented communities’ access to basic services such as healthcare, education and infrastructure

4. *Calls for* all members of the United Nations to promote fair political representation for unrepresented communities within national and international forums

5. *Asks* all states to acknowledge and freely allow political self-determination over a distinct territory for unrepresented groups so that they can achieve political autonomy

6. *Demands* the ability to address the United Nations on climate change and have guaranteed protection from the relevant government for reducing a unilaterally agreed amount of pollution and encouraging the use of renewable energy sources