

# **Second Committee: ECOFIN**

## **Background Guide**

# **Georgia Tech Model United Nations**

the 24th GTMUN  
High School Conference  
October 9th-10th, 2023





## Topic 1

# Threat of Resource Cartels on the Global Market & Media

### Key Terms

*Resource Cartel:* When companies create an agreement to fix the price of a product, usually by making it more expensive, in order to boost the company's revenue.<sup>1</sup>

*Resource:* An asset that can be used for benefit, support or wealth.

*Monopoly:* When a singular business or individual has exclusive control over a service or product on the market.

*Price Fixing:* An agreement between individuals or corporations to keep the price of a product or resource at a certain amount.

*Oligopoly:* An oligopoly is a market structure where a small number of businesses have significant influence over the economy.<sup>2</sup>

# Introduction

From a consumer level to an international level, trade is invaluable. It provides companies with the resources that they require to make products, and provides those same products to people around the world. Whilst trading or buying products firms and people seek to maximize their profits, and the money that they spend. Usually the ability of companies to maximize profits at the expense of the consumer is limited due to high rates of competition, which leads to companies having to reduce prices, or innovate.

However, in markets such as oil, natural gas, steel, transportation, diamonds, cocoa and vitamins, which are oligopolies, the small number of competitors has led to the rise of resource cartels, and price fixing agreements. Although these agreements can help producers, such as farmers, be properly compensated, they often come at the expense of the consumer, and many times are unnecessary. These agreements often make products more expensive or unattainable for different people within the market, and have done an incalculable amount of damage to consumers. For this reason in many countries price fixing is illegal via antitrust laws, which more than 120 countries have.<sup>3</sup> With the punishment being extremely large fines against the company or the owners of the companies. However, cartels are sometimes protected under nations international trade laws, thus making them hard to disrupt.

Some prominent resource cartels are; Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), De Beers, Cocoa Cartel and The Diamond Producers Association. However, in many cases resource cartels do whatever they can to keep their activities secret, with an Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) report saying, "faced with a document demand from the competition authority, loaded two automobiles with bid files and took them to the country, where it took a full day to burn them in "four huge bonfires".<sup>4</sup> This often makes it challenging for these cartels to be discovered by international organizations and nationstates, along with keeping them from the public's eye, thus increasing their effectiveness and ability to illegally control the market.

The purpose of this committee is to deal with "economic growth and development such as macro-economic policy questions; financing for development; sustainable development; globalization and interdependence".<sup>5</sup> In doing so delegates should find a manner to protect the global market & media

<sup>1</sup> Library of Congress, "Organizations and Cartels"

<sup>2</sup> Investopedia, "Oligopoly Defined"

<sup>3</sup> Fiona Morton, "How Do You Enforce Antitrust Law in a Global Marketplace?"  
OECD, "Hard Core Cartels – Harm and Effective Sanctions"

<sup>5</sup> United Nations, "Economic and Financial Committee (Second Committee)"

In doing so delegates should find a manner to protect the global market & media from resource cartels or to back them, without infringing on any nations sovereignty, and ensuring that the right to privacy is not violated.

## History

Although resource cartels have existed for thousands of years, they cartels began gaining prevalence in the late 1800's and early 1900's, when corporations began to dominate a variety of industries. At their peak, before WWII, resource cartels controlled 40% of global trade, and were in fact supported by many European states. However, shortly after the war, European nations began combating them. With Britain limiting most cartels in 1956 and Germany banning most cartels in 1957. However, France didn't outlaw resource cartels until the 1980s, and instead opted to outlaw price-fixing. Furthermore, most of Europe (excluding Switzerland) opted to follow France's course of action.<sup>6</sup>

On the contrary, within Japan cartels experienced a boom in between 1945 and 1970, and at its peak in 1962 42% of Japan's exports were cartelized. However, inflation creed by rising oil prices delegitimized the cartels. Leading to a decline after the fair trade organization launched its first criminal investigation into Japanese oil companies.

Despite the international condemnation of and shift of opinion about cartels, some still grew after WWII. Perhaps the most infamous resource cartel, OPEC, was founded in 1961, between Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait and Venezuela. Other nations that have joined the pact include, can be seen in Figure 1 (members who joined multiple times have two dates listed).<sup>7</sup> When it was founded it began competing with the Seven Sisters, a different resource cartel that controlled 85% of the world's oil in the 1960s, however today only controls 10%. OPEC rose to prominence in the 1970s when the nations nationalized their oil industries and expanded their influence on the global oil trade. In fact in 1973, OPEC was able to cause an oil crisis by embargoing all nation states that were supporting Israel in the Yom Kippur War. The organization has historically been protected under international trade laws of different nations. However in 2022, the USA passed the NOPEC bill in a 17-4 Senate Judiciary Committee vote.<sup>8</sup>

| Non Founding OPEC members |                      |                       |
|---------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Country                   | Date Joined          | Date Left             |
| Qatar                     | 1961                 | 2019                  |
| Indonesia                 | 1962<br>January 2016 | 2009<br>November 2016 |
| Libya                     | 1962                 | -                     |
| UAE                       | 1967                 | -                     |
| Algeria                   | 1969                 | -                     |
| Nigeria                   | 1971                 | -                     |
| Ecuador                   | 1973<br>2007         | 1992<br>2020          |
| Angola                    | 2007                 | -                     |
| Gabon                     | 1975<br>2016         | 1995<br>-             |
| Equatorial Guinea         | 2017                 | -                     |
| Congo                     | 2018                 | -                     |

Figure 1

<sup>6</sup> Jeffery Fear, "Cartels and Competition: Neither Markets nor Hierarchies"

<sup>7</sup> OPEC, "OPEC: Brief History"



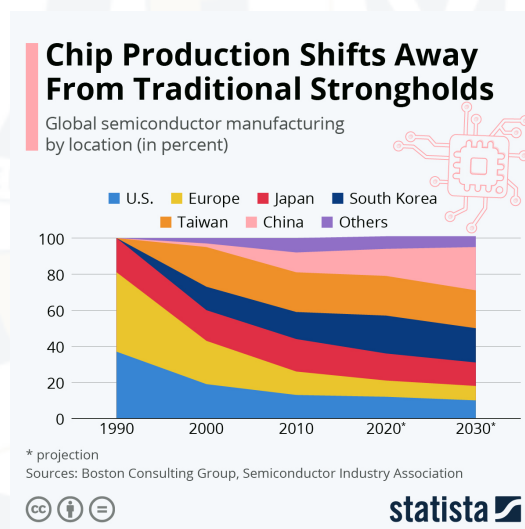
The bill would enable the United States General Attorney to prosecute members of OPEC for antitrust violations, but the bill has not been yet signed into law, and the details on how the general attorney could prosecute a nation state are unclear.

Furthermore, during decolonization, resource cartels often arose and became a key part of new nations development processes. With some developing countries beginning to work together through the United Nations Conference of Trade and Development (UNCTAD).<sup>9</sup>

Historically international organizations and courts have also played a role in the prosecution of resource cartels, with the UN Convention against Corruption, World Trade Organization, the ICC and the ICJ all playing important roles. This includes the promotion of transparency within different corporations, especially within the oil, gas and mining sectors. Other actions include the promotion of alternative and green energy to limit the effect of energy cartels, and creating sanctions against different nations that support resource cartels.

## Current

Although the actual number of resource cartels in existence is unknown, they are still extremely prevalent within modern society, and do billions of dollars of damage to consumers on an annual basis. Resource cartels such as the diamond cartels in Africa, and narcotic cartels in South America have been able to contribute to political instability, and are extremely violent with extensive human rights violations. These resource cartels often have little regard for the environment, thus further contributing to environmental pollution, and destruction of animal habitats.



Furthermore, there is a growing concern over the state led cartelization of computer chips and semiconductors, especially within China by the western nations. As similarly to many nations surrounding it, China has access to significant amounts of valuable resources. This concern is amplified through heightened Chinese-Taiwanese tensions, as Taiwan is currently the leading producer of computer chips and semiconductors. These tensions stem from increased military

<sup>8</sup> Timothy Gardner, "Explainer: What is NOPEC, the U.S. bill to pressure the OPEC+ oil group?"

<sup>9</sup> Jeffery Fear, "Cartels and Competition: Neither Markets nor Hierarchies"

action by China, and the Chinese belief that Taiwan, or Chinese Taipei is a part of China.

In order to combat this, nations have taken both national and international measures. An example of one such national measure is the aforementioned US NOPEC bill. Many nation states have imposed fines and jail sentences to be used as a deterrence against those who might be considering forming a resource cartel.

In 2001 the International Competition Network (ICN) was founded by antitrust officials from 14 states, Australia, Canada, the EU, France, Germany, Israel, Italy, Japan, Korea, Mexico, South Africa, the UK, the US, and Zambia. The ICN has five Working Groups: Advocacy, Agency Effectiveness, Cartel, Merger and Unilateral Conduct. However, it is not an intergovernmental organization, and representatives are experts, not country representatives. Thus, the tangible impacts of the ICN are severely limited.<sup>10</sup> Often the group creates encyclopedias about antitrust measures, and recommends different national and border practices.

In 2020, the UN created an anti resource cartel group called the Working Group on Cross-Border Cartels. The group is open to all nation states, and does not have any financial implications on the budget of the UN. Its goal is to “facilitate information exchange and consultations, and to report to the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Competition law and policy”.<sup>11</sup> The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development recently backed this group, saying in a statement “Given the international scale of certain crises, it is crucial for authorities to exchange information across borders, to create effective mechanisms to counter companies that engage in cross-border practices restricting competition.”<sup>12</sup>

However, these actions are generally led by European and American nation states, as generally South American, Asian and African nation states have had weaker stances against and been more openly exploited by resource cartels.

On the other hand, in 2022 OPECs influence has expanded, as oil and gas prices across the world have skyrocketed due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. This placed immense power within the hands of the cartel as they have been able to damage economies by reducing their oil production, thus further increasing the price of a barrel of oil.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, OPEC nations have been able to use the threat of cutting oil production as a negotiating tool. Thus demonstrating that in the modern world, nations who act like resource cartels when controlling a valuable resource have immense influence, and furthering western fears of what China might be able to do.

<sup>10</sup> Andreas Mundt, “International competition network (ICN)”

<sup>11</sup> UNCTAD, “Working group on cross-border cartels”

<sup>12</sup> BRICS Competition, “UNCTAD Extends the Mandate of the Working Group on Cross-Border Cartels”

<sup>13</sup> Anshu Siripurapu and Andrew Chatzky, “OPEC in a Changing World”

# Directives

As the Economic and Financial Committee of the second general assembly of the United Nations, you will be tasked to:

- Discuss issues relating to economic growth and development,
- Discuss globalization and interdependence,
- Discuss sustainable development,
- Promote global economic growth, and global partnerships,
- Insure that the sovereignty of nation states is not violated,

Some guiding questions to consider whilst conducting research for the committee are as follows:

- Does your nation have antitrust laws? If so, what have they done to enforce them at a national level?
- Is your nation a leading producer in any rare resources?
  - If so, are the resources nationalized?
  - Are they privately owned?
- Does your nation belong to a resource cartel such as OPEC?
- Does your nation belong to any anti-resource cartel international organizations?
- What are the challenges in combating or defending resource cartels?
  - How can an international body combat or defend secret deals by privately owned businesses?

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## Topic 2

# Brain Drain

(Protecting National Sovereignty Through Industry)

### Key Terms

*Brain Drain:* The emigration of trained or educated people from a certain country to other countries

*Brain Gain:* The immigration of trained or educated people from different countries to a specific country

*Reverse Brain Drain:* The return of highly educated or trained people to their home country after working abroad for a significant period of time

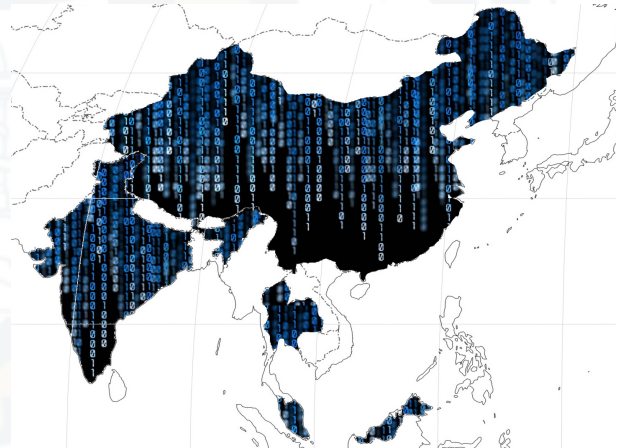
*Brain Waste:* When a nation is unable to provide skilled positions to foreign skilled workers. Thus leading to foreign workers taking lesser skilled or educated positions.

*Brain Circulation:* The mutually beneficial scenario where nations gain knowledge by sending their workers abroad, and then having them return home.

## Introduction

Brain drain has an unequal effect across the entirety of the world. In some nations it helps improve the economy by providing them with an influx of skilled and educated laborers, whilst in others it hampers the industry and furthers the divide between developed and undeveloped nations as typically more developed nations experience brain gain, whilst under developed nations experience brain drain as more developed nations can offer better economic opportunities. However, economic opportunities are not the only factor that influences brain drain.

This can lead to the threatening of a nation's sovereignty in a variety of ways, including, the aforementioned loss of skilled and educated laborers. Furthermore, it can weaken a nation's institutions, especially in terms of education, which can have multi-generational effects, and reduce a nation's ability to govern and grow in the future. Both of these can make nation states more reliant on other nations, thus bringing into question their sovereignty. Furthermore, it often makes them vulnerable to political unrest, something that usually further contributes to brain drain.



For these reasons it can be seen that it is extremely important for developing nations to combat brain drain or gain reverse brain drain, such that they can not only further their and avoid political instability, and protect their sovereignty against nation states that might be looking to expand their influence.

However, there are a variety of factors that can contribute to brain drain, some of which include, lack of opportunity, persecution, standard of living, persecution, general safety, amongst others. Some of these, and their effects will be covered later within this background guide, however it is important to note that there are a variety of other factors that influence brain drain.

# History

The term “brain drain” was first created by the British Royal Society in 1963 in order to describe the loss of scientists and technologists to the United States and Canada during the 1950s and 1960s. However, the concept is as old as the ancient Romans, who benefited from brain gain after they conquered Greece in the 2nd and 1st centuries BCE.<sup>14</sup> As the Romans were able to gain experienced laborers and scientists from their conquered foes, and bring them back to Rome, and other parts of the empire.

Historically brain drain has been caused by persecution, economic opportunities, along with political strife and instability.

Within the modern world, brain gain has primarily benefited Europe and North America, specifically the USA, which saw huge influxes of skilled workers in the 1920s and 1930s leading up to WWII and after WWII. Some prominent scientists who immigrated to the US via brain gain include Albert Einstein and Wernher Von Braun amongst many others. This brain gain was driven not only by improved economic opportunities but also by the devastation created by authoritarian regimes and war. Furthermore, it helped propel American science and industry forward and greatly aided it during both WWII and the Cold War.



*The rise of Nazism in Europe led to large scale brain drain of many of Europe's top scientists including Franck, Bohr, and Einstein*

Although brain gain throughout the 20th century greatly benefited the USA, it came at a cost for other nations. One of the nations that has historically been affected the most by brain drain is India. Brain drain in India began in the 19th century under British rule, however, it was greatly accelerated in the 20th century, which saw significant migration of educated people from India to the USA and other western nations due to the need for engineers, scientists, and physicians in the west.<sup>15</sup> A similar historical trend has occurred throughout Asia especially within China and Russia, which have seen an influx of brain drain to the US especially in relation to computer technology.

Similarly within Central and South America, the US has historically greatly profited from brain drain in Latin America. In the 20th century and into the 2000s, within the American workforce, immigrants for Central and South America have been overrepresented on both ends of the education scale.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup>The Great Educator, “Brain Circulation, Brain Drain, Brain Gain, and Brain Waste”

<sup>15</sup>Meinar Anggraheni, “The Effectiveness of India’s Reverse Brain Drain Policy”



however, the percentage of those with higher education is on average lower than those from Asian countries. This can be seen in Figure 2.

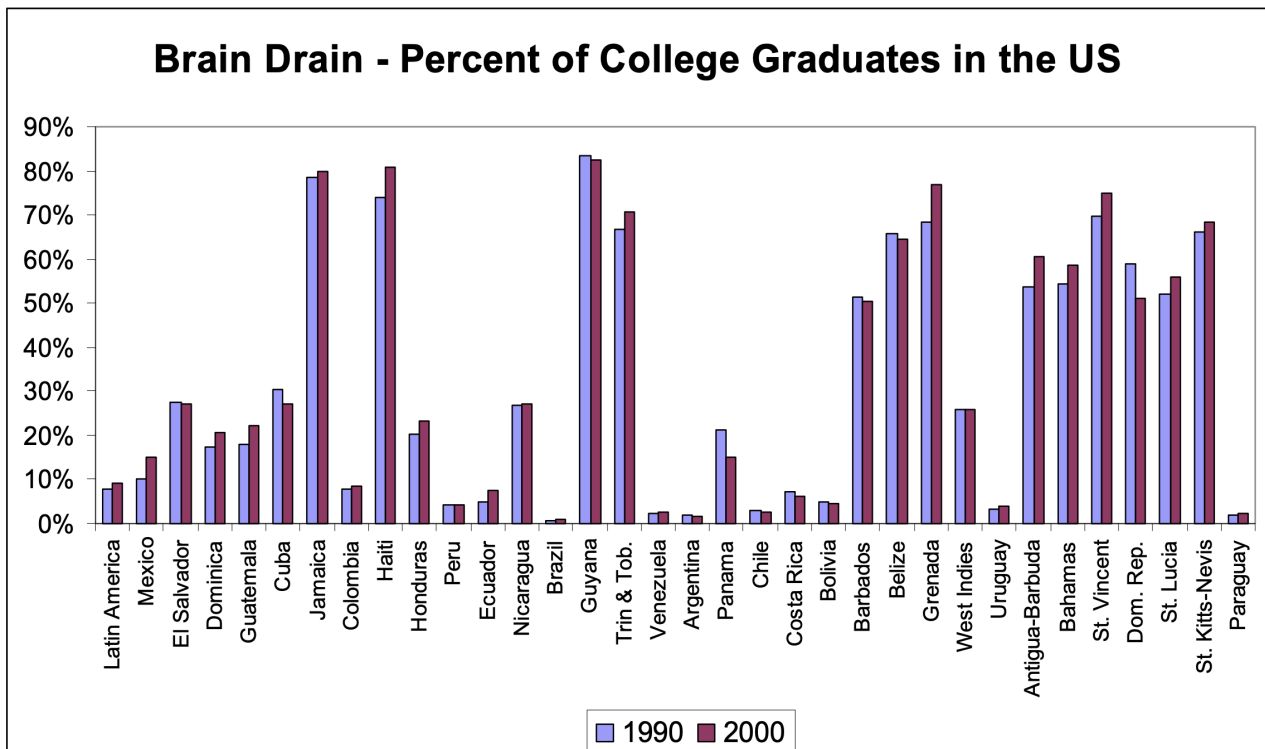


Figure 2: Çağlar Özden, Ratio of Migrants from Latin America who have at least a College Degree and who are in the US Labor Market

Many African nations have had a different experience with brain drain and gain, as whilst the nations were under colonial rule, they usually had net brain gain.<sup>17</sup> This trend continued after many African nations gained independence as throughout the 1960s they saw few effects of brain drain. One likely explanation of this was the Africanization and localization policies which were designed to help Africa retain skilled workers by creating new highly skilled and educated positions, however there were problems with these policies, one of which was the experience of workers, and another being the long lasting effects of racism on society. Brain drain took a turn for the worse in the 1980s, due to the increase in globalization, technological developments and political instability and civil wars. This led to a lack of skilled labor which in turn reduced economic growth, and the lack of medical workers also led to the spread of HIV and AIDS within different nations.

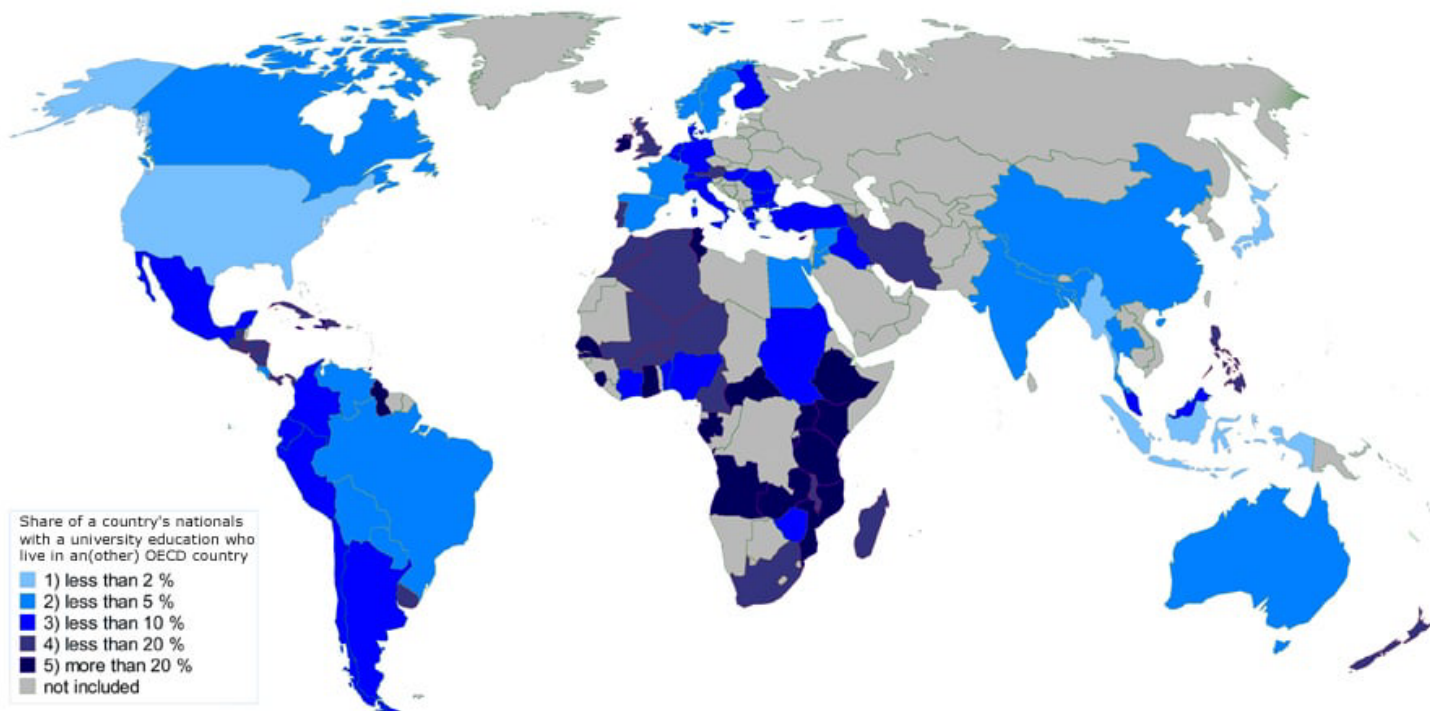
In order to combat or increase the effects of brain drain and gain, governments have implemented a variety of tactics, including but not limited to, changing immigration policies, investing in education and professional development, creating incentives for workers to stay in their home countries, collaboration between universities and companies, and policies aimed at reversing brain drain.

<sup>16</sup> Çağlar Özden, "BRAIN DRAIN IN LATIN AMERICA"

<sup>17</sup> Amos O. Odenyo, "An Assessment of the African Brain Drain, with Special Reference to the Kenyan Mid-Career Professional"

## Current

Despite many borders closing for the Covid-19 pandemic, the effect of brain drain and gain has only been amplified over the past decades, in fact the pandemic accelerated the brain drain in certain countries such as Brazil, which saw a rise of an anti-scientist environment. This anti-scientist sentiment only worsened the ongoing brain that was present due to political instability and a lack of funds for scientists. However, this sentiment is not limited to Brazil, and is worrisome across the entirety of the world.



u/Xamos99, Map of Brain Drain, 2019

Another factor that has heavily influenced brain drain is the ongoing wars across the globe. Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February of 2022, both nations have seen a substantial increase in brain drain and emigration. Thus further damaging both nations' economies, which have already been crippled by the war. Similarly this problem is present in almost every nation with an ongoing war, and political instability, such as Yemen, which is currently suffering from a lack of teachers in higher education, a problem that is only getting worse due to their low pay, the civil war and lack of research opportunities.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Amos O. Odenyo, "An Assessment of the African Brain Drain, with Special Reference to the Kenyan Mid-Career Professional"

<sup>19</sup> Dei and Asgharzadeh, "What Is to Be Done? A Look at Some Causes and Consequences of the African Brain Drain"

<sup>20</sup> Muthanna and Sang, "Brain drain in higher education: Critical voices on teacher education in Yemen"

Throughout many places in Africa the situation is similarly bleak, the African Youth Survey found that out of 4,500 people age 18-24, 52% are likely to consider emigrating, and 28% felt positive about the trajectory of their nation.<sup>21</sup> When they spoke to an 18 year old in Nigeria, he stated that the reason that he wanted to leave was due to the insecurity in Nigeria, high rates of kidnapping, high unemployment and low standard of living. These are some of the main reasons African nations are severely struggling to stop the effects of brain drain.<sup>22</sup> However, some western universities, partially in the USA and Canada, are working with some African universities in order to facilitate brain circulation, and help regenerate higher education in the country of origin of the university staffers.

Recently, when looking at the issue of brain drain, the UN Development Program stated that one way to mitigate brain drain was assisting countries by helping them fix the underlying incentive issues, such as low pay, economic growth opportunities and research opportunities, along with “promoting knowledge networks, market access, remittances, facilitating direct investment and supporting return migration.”<sup>23</sup>

The World Economic Forum proposed a slightly different solution, when commenting on the brain drain of doctors and physicians. Stating it is important to allow medical students to train in world class clinical settings, even if that means training abroad, whilst also encouraging them to practice in their homeland. Thus, facilitating Brain Circulation.

However neither of these possible solutions takes into account the effect of ongoing wars, political instability, security and persecution. Therefore there are still many possible solutions that have not yet been explored.

<sup>21</sup>Cecilia Macaulay, “African brain drain: ‘90% of my friends want to leave’”

<sup>22</sup> Luc Ngwé, “African brain drain: is there an alternative?”

<sup>23</sup> UNDP, “Brain drain is not irreversible: turning drain to gain through incentives”

# Directives

As the Economic and Financial Committee of the second general assembly of the United Nations, you will be tasked to:

- Discuss issues relating to economic growth and development,
- Discuss globalization and interdependence,
- Help finance development,
- Help with the eradication of poverty,
- Promote global economic growth, and global partnerships,
- Insure that the sovereignty of nation states is not violated,

Some guiding questions to consider whilst conducting research for the committee are as follows:

- Does your country suffer from brain drain or brain gain?
  - If brain gain, is there brain waste?
  - If brain drain, is there brain circulation?
- Are there any factors in your nation contributing to economic or political instability in your nation?
- Is your nation involved in any international efforts to combat brain drain?
- Historically has your nation helped other nations develop?
  - To what extent, and why?
- What are the challenges in overcoming or supporting brain drain and brain gain?
  - How can an international body combat or support the emigration of skilled workers from one country to another?



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