

**Committee:** Trusteeship Council

**Agenda Item:** The Trust Territory of Western Samoa

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## Introduction

The moment the 1945 conference in San Francisco was held, it brought with it a tendency to implement ideas that were extremely radical and unfamiliar to the states at the time. One of these was decolonization, and it is specified in Chapter 12 of the Charter of the United Nations; called the International **Trusteeship System**. To create an international body that would supervise the governance of pre-League of Nations mandates, then referred to as **trust territories**. The problematic administration of these trust territories showed itself more clearly when the colonizers accepted their colonies to be a part of the land that sought help in self-governance.

One of the Polynesian states of our day, the Independent State of Samoa, is one of those trust territories. Named “Western Samoa”, its existence lasted for 51 years, and in 1997, it managed to gain full independence as a sovereign state. From a collection of islands inhabited by Polynesian settlers, the Samoan history has evolved to become just one of the many colonies in the Pacific Sea, and when many government officials were grown off of colonialism, it was time for them to start the process of becoming a fully-independent state. The effect of the Trusteeship Council can be seen here, as during those 51 years, Western Samoa was under the assistance of the United Nations, and when both parties felt that the transition phase was complete, The Western Samoan territory was free to declare their independence.

This study guide aims to provide detailed explanations of the history and functions of the United Nations Trusteeship Council, as well as its case of Western Samoa and the Samoan history; to see its effects on Samoa’s institutions and its overall state.

## Definition of Key Terms

**Trusteeship Council:** Founded in 1945, it is one of the six main organs of the United Nations that seeks to oversee the governance of trust territories to help their decolonization processes. It has stopped all operations since 1994.

**International Trusteeship System:** The framework for the Trusteeship Council's operations, designed during the San Francisco Conference(25 April 1945), is specified in Chapter 12 of the **Charter of The United Nations**.

**Trust Territory:** Former colonies that are categorized as territories to be supervised by the United Nations to get them prepared for sovereignty.

**Decolonization:** The action or process of a state withdrawing from a former colony, leaving it independent. Popularized as a movement during the 1940s.

**Western Samoa:** Name of the trust territory that existed from 1946 to 1962, later known as The Independent State of Samoa. It is named that way due to a part of the Samoan region being called "American Samoa".

**Colonial Administration:** The system that colonists implemented upon their colonies, usually characterized by the exploitation of natural resources and local peoples in search of revenue making.

## Major Actors Involved

### New Zealand

After the San Francisco Conference, Western Samoa was recognized as a trust territory, and New Zealand was assigned as the responsible state to administer Western Samoa under the Trusteeship Council. This is due to the control of the colony being given to the New Zealandian colony by the British Empire when they seized control from the German Empire during WWI.

It is important to note that New Zealand's control over the Samoan land was criticized for its harsh governance, particularly the policies implemented during the influenza pandemic in the late 1910s which have been crucial reasons for the rise of the **Mau Movement**, representing Samoan resistance. This style of administration shifted when Western Samoa was turned into a trust territory, and New Zealand contributed to the foundation of the parliament and other factors that made Western Samoa a *self-governable* state.

### Mau Movement

Founded particularly after New Zealand's several failures in keeping Western Samoa as a stable colony, it is one of the most important movements that advocated for self-determination and indigenous governance in Samoa. Meaning "firm declaration" in Samoan, it served as a nonviolent resistance organization that saw its ways of protest in mass protests and civil disobedience. It has its name as the movement that galvanized unity among the Samoan people.

### British Empire

Though they didn't have much direct influence on Western Samoa, their way of governing the dominion of New Zealand as a whole affected how New Zealand administered Western Samoa. Not only the framework for the parliamentary system in Samoa is taken by Britain, but New Zealand's shift in policies is also due to Britain's changes in opinion about ideas like decolonization.

### Samoan Indigenous Leadership

This leadership, structured around the local matai system of chiefdom's role is prevalent in negotiations between the UN and New Zealand. They advocated for governance to be rooted in traditional Samoan culture to avoid their customs being overshadowed by colonialists.

### United States

The United States has been one of the most crucial global powers in the 20th century in many aspects, in this case, the spreading of decolonization and globalization as well. Not only the conference that founded the Trusteeship Council was held in the States, but they were also one of the biggest advocates for the self-determination of nation-state sales in the global political scene. The States also kept strategic interests around the Polynesian Islands, Samoa is an interesting case as they hold a part of these islands, named “American Samoa”. Already holding a territory there, they also initiated some indirect pressure on New Zealand for self-governance-related policies and reforms to be implemented as fast as possible.

## General Overview of the Issue

### Pre-Colonial Samoa

The invention of canoes by the Polynesian society caused a revolution and offspring of voyagers that visited and settled almost every single habitable island. Samoa is one of these regions of several islands, and it was settled around 1500-900 BCE. Its first settlers have a strange history as they are one of the few islands where there are no ruins that would prove the existence of local pottery. Still, some archeologists argue that the pottery used in Samoa was almost always imported from closer islands. Some of the closest islands to Samoa in terms of relations are Tonga and Fiji. There have been cases of intermarriage between the chiefdoms/kingdoms, and this has also led to the creation of cultural events like gatherings where these marriages are acknowledged. The Samoan history from the first settling to the first European contact leaves many historians clueless as their primitive lifestyle also brought with it zero written texts about the history of Samoa.

### The Colonial Era

The first European discoverer to ever land foot in Samoa was Jacob Roggeveen(1722), and it was followed by many other Europeans.

There wasn't any important interaction between the Indigenous population and the Europeans until 1787; where Jean-François de Galaup, comte de Lapérouse, a French commodore visited Samoa and a minor conflict that led to several deaths, notably 12 Frenchmen.

The first arrival which started the process of change in Samoan sociocultural structure would occur around 1830, when a group led by English missionary John Williams arrived in Samoa with his English, Tahitian, and Cook Islander missionaries and traders. To further extend this mission of Christianity, Tahitian converts were brought as well, and as a result of their success, the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa was founded.

In 1855, a German trade company named J.C. Godeffroy & Sohn found opportunities in the Samoan land, and the first German-Samoan interaction would result in a butterfly effect. The next years of the 19th century had more German companies interested in Samoa, and many plantation projects were started for coconut, rubber, and cocoa. Meanwhile, a previously founded UK consul also allowed British enterprises to enter Samoa. The next major nation to join this party would be the United States, but its aims differed from the former countries. After 1877 which marked the arrival of the American Navy, many alliances with local chiefdoms were made, specifically in Tutuila, one of the largest and most populous islands in Samoa. 23 years after the first American touch to Samoan soil, a flag of the States was raised on April 17, 1900. That Eastern part of Samoa is now known as American Samoa.

Since Samoa Wasn't entirely colonized by the USA, the other two felt the need to exploit the land as well and a rivalry of these three was born. Since all three countries were forming alliances with chiefdoms with the given incentive of political authority to those chiefdoms, tensions between local chiefdoms rose. After two Samoan civil wars, the German Empire, the United Kingdom, and the States all agreed that the tensions should be ended, so they formed a commission of three diplomats who were given the task of dividing the entire region into three.

This event is called the **Samoa Tripartite Convention**(1899), and it resulted in the USA taking the two main islands that are still known as American Samoa, the German Empire taking what is the modern borders of Samoa, and Britain ceding all their claims in exchange for German Empire giving off their protectorates in the North Solomon Islands.

Not even a decade later, the search for independence by the Samoan peoples were desired, so they launched the **Mau movement** in 1908, led by chief Lauaki Namulauulu Mamoe, but he and all his relatives were exiled just one year later and almost all died before seeing Samoa ever again.

## World War 1

There is a reason why WW1 is considered a “World War” as a whole, while not containing the entire count of states involved in the war, there still was combat in almost every imaginable region, including Polynesia. Britain’s closest major dominion, New Zealand was involved in the battles around the Pacific islands, so the New Zealandian military sent an expeditionary force to German Samoa like other colonies to limit the German supply of natural resources during the war and also make them their strategic colonies. The campaign was a success without any resistance, and New Zealand was able to take control of Western Samoa immediately. Later on, the German Empire would relinquish all their claims on their Pacific colonies, and Western Samoa was now a part of the dominion of New Zealand.

## New Zealand Rule

The British colonial rule of Samoa was hit unfortunately by the immediate Spanish flu, considering 90% of the entire population being infected and 20% of them dying, New Zealand was extremely unsuccessful in avoiding the pandemic. A few kilometers away, the United States governing of Eastern Samoa was able to avoid a mass spreading, and this led to a part of Samoan citizens advocating for transferring of administration from New Zealand to the United States, but it was recalled in a few days. This recalling didn’t stop some amounts of resistance though.

During the New Zealand rule, the Mau movement became more active against the harsh governance. Despite them being the most important independence movement, they were non-violent as well. But still, in a few years, the movement gained popularity and momentum, and local chiefdoms also supported the idea of abandoning New Zealand; the majority of the population had already grown off of being a British colony.

The increasingly popular movement was struck by an unnecessarily controversial decision; On the 1929, 28th of December, 12 highly ranked Mau movement members were all shot during a commemoration, and the rest that were critical of the New Zealandian administration were also sent to exile. This is still known as one of the biggest events in Samoan history, and the New Zealand government apologized for this action in the 1960s.

One of the exiled advocates for independence was Olaf Frederick Nelson, half Swedish half Samoan Mau leader, and he has continued his funding and assistance to the Mau movement even though he was exiled. His position is seen as crucial to their sovereignty.

### Western Samoa as a Trust Territory

During the Second World War, it was agreed upon to have a new international organization that would assist former colonies that would gain their independence at one point but couldn't get them immediately due to the need for necessary institutions and policies before it was possible. On December 13, 1946, a vote by the General Assembly approved Western Samoa to be recognized as one of these trust territories. This meant that Western Samoa had guaranteed their independence for the near future, so their representatives had three requests to be fulfilled as they were seen to be concerning problems while they were recognized as a trusted territory. These three requests could be listed as;

1. Asking for self-government for Samoa,
2. Asking for New Zealand to be considered the "Protector and Advisor to Samoa", the way England is to Tonga,

3. Asking for the division of the Samoan islands between American Samoa and Western Samoa to be left the way it is until an official meeting with East and West is arranged.

While the second was certain, the first was somewhat going to happen at a point in time, the third request was seen as impossible to execute by the Trusteeship Council since American Samoa was completely under the governance of the States, so it didn't fall into the trust territory category. Since the Trusteeship Council's jurisdiction could only touch on subjects in which "one or more of any trust territory's affairs is concerned", it wasn't taken very seriously, but meeting reports include that Samoans would request the same thing from time to time.

What was the agreement upon Western Samoa implied that Western Samoa would be granted self-government and they would be visited for this purpose so that all relevant facts would be ascertained and reported back to the Council? This brought with itself many problems with the composition of this mission. Sir Carl Berendsen, where the representative of New Zealand, argued that appointed people to the Western Samoan mission should be experts in colonial affairs as they were seen as the fittest part of the population that would find and understand issues involved in a territory's self-advancement. While this could be considered controversial, the Trusteeship Council went that way; the only indicator to decide the relevance of Berendsen's argument is to see how Western Samoa had turned out.

The group didn't consist entirely of former colonizers though; Dr. Felix Keesing, author of a work about Samoan people, and Senator Eduardo Cruz-Coke of Chile were also taking part in it. Not only would they turn out to be fortunate choices, but the United Nations wanted to guarantee its chances in Western Samoa being a successful case in former colonies that would gain their independence later on.



During the first meeting where Western Samoa was now recognized as a trust territory, Samoan leaders (members of *Fautua*: descendants of the royal families of Samoa) refused to make any comment on it before it was presented to the population. As a result, administrators and Fautua have called for the formation of *Fono*, basically a national congress that contains representatives from each district; thus, full representation of the entire Samoan population was formed very quickly.

While the first congress meeting showed that there was a consensus on desiring self-determination, a few conflicts around Samoan people would come out later on. The biggest of these conflicts is between traditional behavioral patterns and adapting to Western techniques and lifestyles. Of course, the United Nations being involved in these former colonies would bring a westernization process as well, and this would cause a division in the way Samoa is governed. That's due to New Zealand leaving local administration exclusively to established Samoan methods. The same chiefdom system that existed for thousands of years was still being carried out, and at the same time, the new central institutions were almost entirely Westernized, and they were new, there was little to no central governing before European invasions, so the Samoan population were met with something entirely new that they have to complete like it's an assignment if they want to be completely independent, but at the same time their local techniques of governing were continuing, at that point, the Samoan people were unsure of their nation's future trajectory.

This phenomenon of being unsure about their trajectory kept going on with other problems. Western Samoa had its example of that too: people couldn't foresee what was next after New Zealand completely left their country. Before any European contact, the entire region of Samoa was riddled with dynasty wars. Furthermore, these dynasty wars were so prevalent that European invaders took advantage of them when they were attempting to colonize them. Samoans were afraid that history would repeat itself, but at the same time they never questioned the importance of Fautua, and this dilemma left with it a faint-heartedness in Samoans.

Another criticism usually made is that there weren't any reforms to construct an educational system. One of the abstract requirements in creating a sovereign nation is to create a supply of trained personnel in every possible sector. For Western Samoa, Primary education is said to be non-existent, and this shortage was recognized by Samoan leaders, but any policy to be implemented was a little late as a few years would be entirely composed of the problem of "not enough qualified people".

The Samoan population consisted of three main parts at that time: local Samoans, making the majority, Europeans, who were the smallest part of the population and were for the most part government officials, and Europeans with mixed origins. The last two mentioned were respecting the Samoans' right to self-determination and didn't have any problems with it, except they were afraid that it would result in discriminatory measures against them. As they were the only answer to the qualified people crisis mentioned above, the United Nations had to accept the fact that the economic well-being of the territory depended upon the trade that was almost entirely conducted by Europeans there, so they had to have some say in the administering of Samoa as well, even if that meant they would be represented out of proportion to their actual numbers due to a deficit of Samoan people.

Even though Western Samoa's position as a trust territory had its problems, part of it was due to the Trusteeship Council being a relatively new organization, and decolonization was still a refining idea. After a few years, the UN's visiting reports had a set system, and this served an amazing purpose of seeing Western Samoa's swift progress in becoming a sovereign state. The United Nations saw Samoa's development divided into four:

1. Political advancement, where a constitution is being planned, local governments are being checked, and public service is controlled
2. Economic advancement, where development is ready to be followed while public finance is being followed and the problem of "reparation estates" being reported

3. Social advancement looks at how Europeans, women, and other groups are being seen and medical/health services are being controlled as well
4. Educational advancements

To further elaborate on the reparation estates problem mentioned above: Since the land was colonized by the German Empire formerly, a chunk of the land (most of the time places where plantations were built) would count as land owned by the Germans, and after the First World War, New Zealand seized control of these lands, and after it ended, the Germans accepted that the revenue gained from those plantations would be given to New Zealand by the name war reparations. The Samoan population was somewhat disturbed by the fact that the revenue of some of the lands with the highest value would just go to New Zealand, this was mentioned by Samoan representatives as a problem to be solved, and the United Nations took measures to it as well.

The next milestone Western Samoa had reached would be their constitution written: In March 1953, an issue written by New Zealand proposed a system of self-government designed under the Westminster model (England parliamentary system), and a year and a half later, a constitutional convention was organized and the entire model was under review. With the parliamentary system, a few principles were adopted as well. One of the controversial principles was that they decided that only *matai* (chiefs) would have the right to vote for election instead of universal suffrage. While seen as unacceptable by New Zealand at first, they decided to accept it, considering it “a wish of the Samoan people.”

Another accepted thing was that Tupua Tamasese Mea’ole and Malietoa Tanumafili, both chiefs, would become the first heads of state until their resignation or death. The next heads of state would be chosen by the legislature. After a few major and minor adjustments, on the 28th of October 1960, the constitution was approved, and a year later a referendum was held. With 86.5% of the votes being in favor of the constitution, there wasn’t much left for Samoa to declare its independence.

As the reports would show, the United Nations agreed that Samoa had made such swift progress in becoming a self-governing state thanks to New Zealand's helpful assistance, and it was decided that Samoa could declare its independence. When the calendar showed 1 January 1962, Samoa became the first Polynesian state to declare its independence; it is hailed as not only the success of former indigenous populations but also a victory lap against colonization.

## Timeline of Important Events

Date:	Event:
1722	First-ever interaction between European colonizers and Samoan locals
1830	Launch of British missionaries' conversion of Samoans to Christianity
1855	The first interaction between Germans and Samoans
2 December 1899	Samoaan Tripartite Convention was held, and the region was divided into two, where Western Samoa is considered German land
1900	The Treaty of Cession of Tutu'ila was signed, giving Eastern Samoa entirely to the States
1908	The Mau Movement was launched, seeking independence
1914-1918	First World War, also marking New Zealand seizing control over Western Samoa
1918	Start of the Spanish Flu, one of the con

## Related Documents

In this section, provide past documents related to the issue. If the United Nations has passed any resolution about the agenda, include it here. Annual reports from international agencies, flagship journals of regional institutions, and publications from credible sources are the types of documents that can be added to this section.

## Past Solution Attempts

New Zealand exercised administration authority in Western Samoa after the First World War in 1920. This was partly due to the collaboration with the League of Nations Mandate System. The League of Nations also expected assistance from New Zealand to Western Samoa to implement a self-governing system. However, struggles and challenges were present. For instance, New Zealand's Western-style policies and governance failed to align with and respect Samoan culture. Also, New Zealand's response to the **Mao Movement** faced criticism due to the usage of military force resulting in outbreaks of violence and casualties. After the Second World War, Western Samoa became a *UN Trust Territory* in 1946, due to the United Nations and the United Nations Trusteeship Council witnessing additional assistance being imperative. Still, New Zealand had commandments over the region. Expectations of assistance, and accountability measures from the Samoan people, the United Nations, and international observers became greater against New Zealand. With these efforts, New Zealand provided annual reports to the United Nations Trusteeship Council. Additionally, New Zealand established a base to improve the structures of the already existing *Fono o Faipule*, a legislative body that included Samoan chiefs and elected representatives from New Zealand with a main aim on public needs for the Samoan people and future self-governance efforts.

## Possible Solutions

Samoa faces challenges with climate change, rapid changes in the global economy, and a lack of technological equipment. The United Nations and its Member States can assist Samoa in coping with these challenges. The Trusteeship Council can collaborate with the World Trade Organization and the Economic and Social Council to find up-to-date economic opportunities that will significantly modernize Samoa's economy, which heavily relies on agriculture and tourism. Enhanced cooperation with the international community to strengthen political alliances and partnerships would significantly benefit Samoa in challenging periods.

## Useful Links

History of Samoa:

<https://www.britannica.com/place/Samoa-island-nation-Pacific-Ocean/History>

The Mau Movement: <https://commonslibrary.org/mau-movement/>

The Resolution:

[https://undocs.org/Home/Mobile?FinalSymbol=A%2FRES%2F63%2520\(I\)&Language=E&DeviceType=Desktop&LangRequested=False](https://undocs.org/Home/Mobile?FinalSymbol=A%2FRES%2F63%2520(I)&Language=E&DeviceType=Desktop&LangRequested=False)

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