UCIMUN 2025

Art Theft

Background Guide

By: Raymond Park & Aarav Upadhyaya

Hello, delegates!

Welcome to UCIMUN's 2025 Conference! My name is Raymond and I am a third-year Political Science and International Studies major here at UCI, and I will also be your Art Theft Committee Director. On top of Model UN, here at UCI, I have held positions in student government and also joined political clubs which helped me get an introduction to local policy and advocacy. With my degrees and the organizations I am involved in I would want to pursue a career in global policy and security, such as by joining a government agency. For fun I like to read, I'm really into history and biographies. I have also been binging HBO shows in my free time, Sopranos...The Wire?

This is my first year not only as a director but also my first year at UCIMUN, and I am excited to host the topic we have prepared for you. I'm confident that we'll get to a fun, in-depth look into the world of illicit art trade.

The Art Theft Committee's overall theme revolves around how countless pieces of antiquities and artwork in circulation around the world today were acquired through illegal, or immoral means. The first day/topic revolves around 'thieving' itself. Numerous regions around the world today are experiencing their cultural artifacts disappearing and being found outside their country of origin. Moreover, the countries that are most vulnerable to this exploitation are usually those that are already experiencing crises like conflict. Where these items end up can vary, and the effort to transport and smuggle them around the globe is an industry that generates billions of dollars for actors like criminals and terrorists. As with other criminal industries such as the smuggling of human beings or illicit substances, the smuggling of art is an issue that is of global concern and deliberation.

The second day will highlight repatriation or the return of these items back to their rightful owners. As the conversation shifts from addressing the act of stealing to addressing the actors involved, the historical lens of art theft cannot be ignored. Major European cities are renowned for their museums, boasting some of the most extensive and unique collections of global art. But a growing movement has emerged, uniting many former colonized countries around the world who hope to highlight the injustices and 'crimes of colonialism.' Regions and people who have felt voiceless and marginalized before are now able to stand up and advocate for their culture in the global forum. The crimes of colonialism overcast a large shadow on international relations, as is the case with cultural artifacts and the reality of the bloodshed and exploitation it took to create such famed European collections. As more countries today are increasingly applying pressure on Western museums to return such items, we want to highlight how the global community will come together to tackle this issue together.

I want to emphasize the importance of doing additional research to prepare for the committee, as the topic synopsis is just a starting point to get some base knowledge. If you have any questions, feel free to email me at: raymonlp@uci.edu. I'm looking forward to hearing from you guys and seeing you at the conference!

Thank You,
Raymond Park

Greetings Faculty Advisors and Delegates,

It gives me immense pleasure to welcome you all to the Art Theft Committee at the 33rd edition of Model United Nations at the University of California at Irvine. I, along with Raymond Park, will be serving as your Co-Directors for this committee. Whether this is your first or fifth conference, this will be a journey of diplomacy, strategy, and collaboration unlike any other. We hope to create a valuable experience that you could learn from.

My Model UN experience has been storied with this being the seventh year. It has been nothing short of transformative and I'm eager to create a similar experience for you. Whether it be through pushing you to explore themes deeply and read the subtext or encouraging you to collaborate with your peers, I intend to create a fun, relaxed, and engaging environment where you feel safe to let your creativity and spontaneity flow.

A little bit about myself, I originally hail from India. I am pursuing Biological Sciences with a minor in Mathematics. I aspire to go to medical school or work in any field where I can create a tangible but large-scale impact on people's lives using my background in the sciences. Outside of the committee room, I run from meeting to meeting, trying to balance my commitments to the student government, the school newspaper, and volunteering organizations. In my downtime, I find refuge in music — with house music, Pink Floyd, and indie rock dominating my headphones. I am also currently watching BoJack Horseman, which has been an absolute rollercoaster. (Bonus points if you can discuss any of my interests with me.)

This year, our committee will be discussing two topics, Art Heist and Art Repatriation. These two issues are deeply relevant to the theme of our conference: *"Advancing upon the global issues of our community."* These topics demand not only your analytical rigor but also your empathy — understanding the historical contexts of colonialism will be key to addressing the demand for looted art. The committee will aim to disrupt the global trafficking of stolen art, analyze the factors driving the markets for stolen art, and preserve humanity's collective and shared history. As you sit down to prepare for the conference, I urge you to go beyond the topic synopsis. Think broadly and deeply: are answers to complex problems sanguine and straightforward? Consider the topic synopsis a springboard rather than a boundary. The most compelling debates emerge when you arrive with a well-rounded understanding of your position, the historical context, and innovative policy approaches. Take the time to explore the topic at hand, and think about the themes underneath and the long-term implications. Remember the direction of the committee is entirely in your hands - you can go as fast or slow as you like. This would take some time to get used to.

I cannot express how excited I am to meet each of you in person and to witness the passion and intellect you will bring to the committee. Should you have any questions or need guidance, please do not hesitate to reach out. I am more than happy to assist you in any way I can. Can't wait to see you on campus!

Fiat Lux,

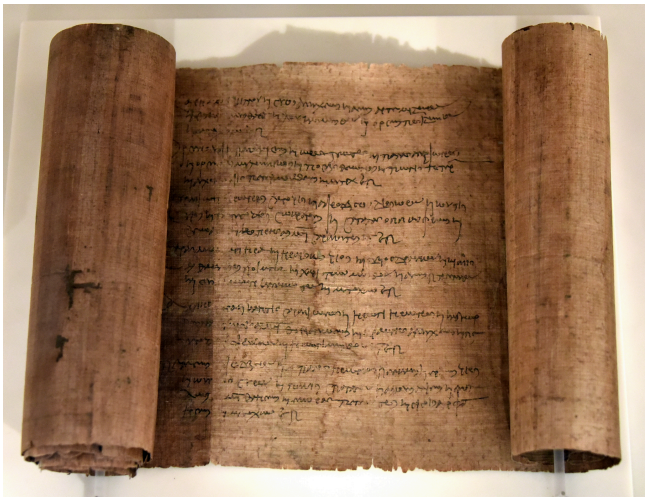
Aarav Upadhyaya

Topic A: The Heist

Introduction

The International Conference on Egypt's Ancient Heritage was meant to be a moment of pride. This was an opportunity for Egypt to showcase its strides in recovering stolen cultural treasures. Held at the historic site of Luxor, the world's leading archaeologists, diplomats, and curators had gathered for a celebration of Egypt's progress. But what was meant to be a triumphant event quickly spiraled into chaos when an unimaginable theft unfolded before their eyes.

Amidst the clinking of glasses and the hum of high-level discussions, a brazen heist took place. It not only stripped Egypt of irreplaceable artifacts but also threatened to undermine global efforts to protect and preserve cultural identities. The stolen pieces were priceless: a papyrus scroll detailing rituals from the reign of Pharaoh Akhenaten, a golden bust of Queen Nefertiti symbolizing Egypt's artistic brilliance, and a relief depicting the construction of the Great Pyramid of Giza, a wonder of the ancient world. These weren't just artifacts, they were the very soul of Egypt's heritage, its history, and its future.



The question that echoed throughout the room as the theft was discovered: How could this happen in broad daylight? The museum was protected by state-of-the-art security, cameras monitored every inch, and the world's eyes were on Egypt. Yet, the thieves had executed their plan with chilling precision, no one had seen a thing. The cameras? Compromised. The footage? Missing. The artifacts? Gone. They vanished without a trace.

Could it have been an inside job? The possibilities were terrifying. Someone had to know the museum's schedule and its weaknesses. Could museum staff, lured by money or coerced into complicity, have played a part? Or was this a more sinister, organized attack by international criminal networks poised to profit from Egypt's loss?

As the investigation deepened, the full weight of the situation became clear. This wasn't just a theft, it was an assault on Egypt's identity. These artifacts were the last tangible links to a civilization that once shaped the world. The theft struck at the heart of Egypt's ongoing battle to recover its stolen treasures from the black market, a struggle already complicated by shadowy private collectors and unscrupulous auction houses. Had the stolen pieces already disappeared into the hidden world of illicit buyers, never to return?

The theft raised darker questions: Who benefits when ancient cultural treasures are looted and erased from history? Was this heist purely about money, or was it a calculated political move? Could powerful nations or collectors be pulling the strings, exploiting Egypt's vulnerability to carve up its cultural legacy?

The world watched as Egypt, scarred by decades of colonial exploitation and recent political upheavals, found itself exposed and vulnerable. The international community, led by organizations like UNESCO, now faced a crucial dilemma: Can global laws and diplomacy truly

protect cultural treasures from the growing black market? How many more pieces of history will disappear before the world takes meaningful action?

Egypt's cultural heritage hangs in the balance. The stolen artifacts may already be lost to the shadows of the black market, but the question remains: Will the world act before it's too late, or will Egypt be forced to watch its past vanish forever?

Description

The Theft of Cultural Heritage – A Global and Egyptian Perspective

The theft of cultural heritage is a multifaceted issue that transcends both time and geography, with deep-rooted historical and socio-political ramifications. From the era of European colonial expansion to the modern-day looting of archaeological sites, the illegal appropriation of cultural property is not only an act of material theft but also one of profound cultural violence. In the modern globalized world, the illicit trade of cultural artifacts has become a highly profitable industry, fueled by demand from private collectors, museums, and auction houses. The theft of cultural heritage, in this context, serves as a powerful tool for both economic exploitation and the assertion of power and identity.

In Egypt, the theft of cultural property is particularly significant due to the country's status as the cradle of one of the world's oldest civilizations. Egypt's archaeological and cultural legacy—from the Old Kingdom to the Ptolemaic era—has long been a source of pride and a symbol of national identity. However, Egypt has experienced some of the most egregious cases of cultural looting in modern history, particularly during the colonial era, when European powers systematically stripped Egypt of its treasures. The removal of artifacts like the Rosetta Stone,

now housed in the British Museum, and the bust of Nefertiti, located in Berlin's Neues Museum, exemplifies the scale of this cultural theft.

The modern-day struggle to reclaim Egypt's stolen heritage is compounded by the complexities of the global art market, where auction houses and private collections often obscure the provenance of ancient artifacts. The widespread looting of archaeological sites during political unrest in the 20th and 21st centuries has further exacerbated the loss of Egypt's cultural treasures, with many artifacts disappearing into the black market.

Historical Context of Art Theft: Egypt and the Colonial Exploitation of Antiquities

The roots of cultural theft stretch back to the colonial era when European powers systematically plundered the cultural heritage of colonized regions. Egypt, with its rich archaeological history, was a prime target for colonial looting. During the 19th and early 20th centuries, archaeologists funded by colonial powers unearthed numerous treasures from ancient Egyptian tombs, temples, and pyramids. These artifacts were often removed from Egypt and displayed in European museums, under the justification that they would be better preserved in the West.

One of the most notable examples of colonial exploitation is the removal of the Rosetta Stone by the British in the early 19th century, a pivotal artifact in deciphering ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs. Similarly, the German archaeologist Ludwig Borchardt removed the iconic bust of Nefertiti, which remains in Germany despite Egypt's repeated calls for its return. These acts of cultural appropriation were framed as "scientific exploration" but ignored Egypt's sovereignty and cultural rights.

This colonial legacy continues to shape Egypt's relationship with its cultural heritage. Many of the artifacts looted during this era remain in Western museums and are central to ongoing debates about the restitution of cultural property. Egypt's calls for the return of artifacts like the Rosetta Stone highlight the broader struggle of formerly colonized nations to reclaim their cultural identity.

The Economics of Art Looting: The Illicit Art Trade and Egypt's Struggles

The economics of art looting are driven by the high demand for cultural property, the significant financial value of these objects, and the global illicit trade networks that facilitate their sale. Egypt's wealth of ancient artifacts makes it a prime target for art theft. The vulnerability of archaeological sites, particularly during periods of political instability, has allowed looters to exploit the country's cultural resources.

During the Arab Spring and subsequent unrest, many archaeological sites in Egypt were raided, and artifacts were smuggled out of the country. These items often found their way to private collectors or auction houses, where their origins were obscured. The lack of stringent regulations in the global art market has made it difficult to trace and recover stolen artifacts, perpetuating the cycle of cultural theft.

Colonialism's Legacy: Egypt's Struggle for Cultural Sovereignty

The colonial era left a lasting legacy of cultural exploitation that continues to shape Egypt's struggles with art theft and the repatriation of stolen heritage. During the 19th and early 20th centuries, colonial powers like Britain, France, and Germany extracted countless artifacts under the guise of scientific exploration. The removal of Egypt's cultural treasures was framed as

preserving global heritage, but it disregarded the sovereignty and cultural rights of the Egyptian people.

Key examples include the export of entire tomb artifacts from the Valley of the Kings and the removal of temple sections, such as the Dendur Temple, now housed in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. These objects were often taken during periods when Egypt lacked the resources or political power to prevent such exploitation.

Today, the struggle for cultural sovereignty revolves around the repatriation of these stolen treasures. Egyptian authorities, led by figures like Zahi Hawass, have intensified efforts to recover artifacts like the Rosetta Stone and Nefertiti's bust. However, resistance from Western institutions, citing "universal heritage," has made repatriation efforts contentious. For Egypt, the return of these artifacts is not just about physical objects—it is about reclaiming identity, history, and dignity.

Legal and Ethical Dimensions of Art Repatriation: Egypt's Challenges

The legal and ethical dimensions of art repatriation are complex, particularly in the case of Egypt. International conventions, such as the 1970 UNESCO Convention, aim to prevent the illicit trade of cultural property and facilitate the return of looted artifacts. While these frameworks provide some guidance, they are often limited in scope and poorly enforced, leaving countries like Egypt at a disadvantage.

The ethical argument for repatriation is grounded in cultural sovereignty and historical justice. Western museums and collectors frequently argue that these artifacts belong to the world and should remain accessible to a global audience. However, this narrative disregards the coercive circumstances under which many of these items were acquired. Critics argue that

retaining these objects perpetuates colonial power dynamics and denies Egypt the ability to fully celebrate and preserve its own history.

Egypt's challenges are further compounded by the murky provenance of many artifacts. Items that were smuggled during the political instability of the 20th century often lack documentation, making it difficult to prove ownership. Despite these obstacles, international cooperation has led to several successful repatriations, such as the return of smuggled antiquities from the United States and Europe in recent years.

The Global Illicit Art Market: Egypt as a Case Study

The theft of Egypt's cultural heritage highlights the larger issue of the global illicit art market. This black market thrives on secrecy, demand from wealthy collectors, and insufficient regulation. Auction houses, galleries, and private buyers often bypass rigorous provenance checks, allowing stolen artifacts to be laundered into legitimate collections.

In Egypt's case, looted artifacts are often smuggled into neighboring countries, such as Libya or Sudan, before being sold on the international market. These networks are highly organized, with traffickers exploiting political instability and weak border controls. Some items even reappear in major auction houses or private collections years after their theft.

Efforts to disrupt the global art market have focused on strengthening international legal frameworks and improving provenance tracking. Technologies like blockchain are being explored to create transparent records of ownership, which could prevent stolen artifacts from being sold. However, the demand for rare artifacts, combined with the complicity of certain institutions, continues to fuel the black market.

Impact on Egypt's Cultural Heritage

The consequences of art theft in Egypt are profound. Each stolen artifact represents a loss not just of material wealth but of historical knowledge and cultural identity. Ancient artifacts often carry unique inscriptions, religious significance, or artistic techniques that are irreplaceable. When these objects are removed from their original context, their cultural and educational value is diminished.

The theft of cultural artifacts also has economic implications. Tourism is a cornerstone of Egypt's economy, and the presence of iconic artifacts in foreign museums diminishes the appeal of its own heritage sites. For example, visitors to Berlin's Neues Museum can view the bust of Nefertiti, while Cairo lacks comparable draws despite being the artifact's rightful home.

The broader impact of art theft includes the erasure of cultural narratives and the perpetuation of historical injustices. For Egypt, reclaiming its stolen heritage is essential not only for preserving its past but also for asserting its place in global history.

The Black Market of Art Theft: A Pervasive & Dangerous Economy Impacting Smaller Nations

The black market for art theft is one of the most persistent and insidious global issues, representing not only an illicit trade but a complex network of crime that spans cultures, nations, and centuries. This trade thrives on secrecy, exploitation, and the lack of regulatory oversight in both the art and global security sectors. While art theft impacts countries around the world, it disproportionately harms smaller nations with rich cultural histories and limited resources to protect their heritage. These nations are often targeted by looters and traffickers who exploit their vulnerabilities, and their cultural treasures are frequently moved through illicit networks,

eventually ending up on the global black market. The consequences of art theft for these nations are profound, as it affects their economy, national identity, and cultural legacy. This essay will explore the nature of the black market for art theft, its historical context, the actors involved in the trade, and the specific impact it has on smaller countries. By examining concrete examples of art theft and trafficking, this paper will shed light on the broader implications of this illicit economy and discuss the urgent need for stronger international cooperation to combat it.

The Nature of the Black Market for Art Theft

The black market for art theft refers to the illegal acquisition, sale, and distribution of cultural property, which ranges from ancient antiquities to valuable works of art. These items are often stolen from museums, archaeological sites, and private collections, before being laundered into the global art market through illicit channels. The black market thrives due to several factors, including the high value of cultural property, the demand for rare and historically significant items, and the relative ease with which stolen art can be moved across borders. Criminal organizations are deeply involved in this market, which is often part of larger illegal operations that include trafficking in drugs, weapons, and people (Finnegan, 2021).

One of the most defining features of the black market for art theft is the opacity of the art world. The art trade operates with minimal oversight, which creates opportunities for criminals to introduce stolen works into legitimate markets. Without adequate systems of provenance or verification, art can be sold to unsuspecting buyers or unscrupulous dealers without any question of its origins. In many cases, forgers will create fake documents to disguise the true provenance of stolen works, enabling traffickers to bypass detection. As a result, the illicit art market has become an integral part of the global economy, worth an estimated $6 to $8 billion annually

(Ruggiero, 2022). The economic incentive behind this trade, combined with the relative lack of penalties for those involved in it, allows the black market to flourish unchecked in many regions.

The Pervasive Dangers of the Black Market

The dangers posed by the black market for art theft extend far beyond economic losses and the erosion of national identities. The illicit trade in stolen art is often tied to larger criminal networks that fund terrorism, organized crime, and other illicit activities. Organized crime syndicates use stolen art as collateral for other illegal operations, often laundering money or hiding illicit gains in the form of rare and valuable objects. The flow of money from art theft, combined with its use in illicit trade, further perpetuates cycles of violence and instability, both locally and globally.

In addition to the immediate dangers posed by the theft itself, the broader effects of art looting include the cultural destruction of entire civilizations. Stolen art is often removed from its historical and cultural context, rendering it impossible to fully appreciate its significance. These works, once removed from their country of origin, are lost to their communities and the global public, leaving future generations unable to learn from and engage with these treasures (Baker, 2020). As a result, art theft has both tangible and intangible consequences, undermining global heritage and distorting our collective memory of human history.

Historical Context: The Legacy of Looting

The illicit art trade is not a modern phenomenon, but rather one that has existed for centuries. Throughout history, looting has been closely tied to periods of war, empire-building, and colonial expansion. The looting of art and cultural artifacts was often seen as a means of

asserting dominance and power over conquered peoples. Ancient Roman emperors, for example, plundered valuable works of art from Greece and Egypt to display in their palaces and temples as symbols of their victory and superiority (Thomson, 2017). Similarly, during the colonial era, European powers systematically stripped their colonies of cultural treasures, often with little regard for the significance of these artifacts to indigenous peoples.

One of the most infamous examples of this colonial looting is the removal of the Parthenon Marbles from Greece by Lord Elgin in the early 19th century. Lord Elgin, the British ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, acquired these sculptures from the Parthenon in Athens and transported them to London. Despite Greece's calls for the return of these sculptures, they remain in the British Museum today, sparking an ongoing international dispute (Zervos, 2016). This case highlights the long-standing issue of art looting by colonial powers, and it underscores the continuing importance of repatriating cultural property to its country of origin. The case of the Parthenon Marbles is just one example of a broader pattern of art theft, particularly from regions that were subjected to imperial domination and exploitation.

The 20th century brought a new dimension to the illicit trade in art, particularly during the two World Wars. The most notorious case of art theft during this period was the Nazi regime's systematic looting of European art. The Nazis, under Adolf Hitler, orchestrated one of the most extensive art theft campaigns in history, seizing works from Jewish families, museums, and cultural institutions across Europe. Paintings by artists such as Rembrandt, Van Gogh, and Vermeer were either hidden in secret storage facilities or sold to fund the war effort (Wegner, 2019). Following the war, efforts to recover these stolen works were hindered by the lack of records and the rapid movement of looted art, much of which ended up in private collections, auction houses, and museums worldwide.

The Black Market Today: A Billion-Dollar Industry

In the post-war era, the black market for art theft grew exponentially, facilitated by advances in technology, improved transportation, and the global expansion of the art market. The increasing demand for rare and valuable works of art, combined with the rise of private collectors and the expansion of auction houses, created a fertile environment for stolen art to be laundered into the legitimate art world (Thompson, 2016). Today, the black market for art is a multi-billion-dollar industry, driven by an elite class of buyers who seek to acquire historically significant objects. Art dealers, galleries, and auction houses, although some may inadvertently sell stolen works, have played an instrumental role in enabling the flow of illicit art through the market.

The emergence of powerful private collectors, particularly in emerging markets such as China and the Middle East, has led to a surge in demand for valuable art objects. As the appetite for rare artifacts grows, so too does the incentive for criminals to target smaller countries rich in cultural heritage. In some cases, looted art is sold at auction houses, such as Sotheby's and Christie's, where it is difficult for buyers to ascertain whether a work is legitimate or stolen (Miller, 2018). The auction houses, although not always complicit, often operate in a legal grey area, lacking rigorous checks and balances to verify provenance. The failure to implement stricter due diligence procedures allows the illicit art market to continue to thrive unchecked.

Impact on Smaller Countries

Smaller nations, particularly those in regions with rich cultural histories but limited resources, are disproportionately affected by art theft. These nations are often unable to protect their cultural heritage adequately, and their treasures become prime targets for looters and

traffickers. Countries such as Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, and many parts of Africa have become hotspots for art theft due to their ongoing conflicts, political instability, and lack of strong governance (Vinogradov, 2019). In these regions, the absence of effective law enforcement and the vulnerability of archaeological sites make cultural heritage particularly susceptible to plunder.

One of the most significant examples of art theft in recent years occurred in Iraq during the early 2000s. In the chaos that followed the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, the National Museum of Iraq in Baghdad was looted, and thousands of priceless artifacts were stolen. The looting was so extensive that the museum's collection, which included items dating back to Mesopotamian civilization, was devastated (Grodin, 2018). Some of these stolen objects were recovered, but many remain lost or have ended up in private collections or on the black market. The destruction of the National Museum, along with the looting of other cultural sites, represents a profound loss not only for Iraq but for the global community, as it deprives future generations of access to irreplaceable historical treasures.

Similarly, in Syria, the ongoing civil war has led to the systematic looting of antiquities from sites like Palmyra and Aleppo, which are among the world's most significant archaeological sites. The illicit trade in these artifacts has contributed to the ongoing conflict in Syria, as the sale of looted art has provided a financial lifeline for a terrorist organization that has wreaked havoc on both the region and the global cultural heritage community.

Countries in sub-Saharan Africa are also vulnerable to art theft, as many of these nations possess rich cultural traditions and artifacts that attract the attention of traffickers. Nations such as Nigeria, Mali, and Ethiopia have been plagued by the theft of religious artifacts, ancient manuscripts, and sculptures, often from indigenous communities or local museums. The trade in

these stolen objects has become a significant issue, with traffickers exploiting local instability and weak law enforcement to remove cultural property from these nations (Herlihy, 2020). The theft of such objects is not only economically damaging but also culturally devastating, as it undermines the identity and pride of communities that have relied on their cultural heritage for generations.

Conclusion

The black market for art theft is a pervasive and dangerous global economy that exploits the vulnerabilities of smaller nations rich in cultural heritage. It thrives on secrecy, weak regulation, and the insatiable demand for rare and significant works of art. The consequences of art theft extend far beyond economic loss, affecting national identity, cultural pride, and global heritage. Smaller nations, particularly those in conflict zones or regions with political instability, are disproportionately affected by this illicit trade, as their cultural treasures become targets for looters and traffickers. To combat this pervasive problem, the international community must strengthen legal frameworks, improve law enforcement cooperation, and implement stricter regulations in the global art market. Only by addressing the root causes of the black market for art theft can we protect cultural heritage, preserve historical knowledge, and prevent further exploitation of vulnerable nations.

Bloc Positions

Bloc 1: U.S., Italy, Austria, Poland, Hungary, Serbia

These are the developed nations with large museums that face incidents of museum heists. These countries did not necessarily undertake active colonial endeavors (excluding Italy) but are still adjacent in position to traditional colonial powers. These countries include central and eastern European countries along with the United States. These countries are impacted by large criminal syndicates that illicitly trade cultural property in or around their geographical territories. These countries face the risk of their museums being targeted. The primary interest of these countries is to safeguard their museums and crack down on illicit trade of cultural property. They would want to coordinate global efforts for the suppression of trafficking, looting, and black market dealings of stolen cultural property. They would want to set up task forces dedicated to monitoring, tracking, and disrupting routes of financing and smuggling of stolen cultural property. They would want to sanction parties involved in the illicit trade of stolen cultural property.

Bloc 2: Nigeria, Egypt, Iraq, Greece, Mexico, Cambodia, India, Nepal, Indonesia, South Africa, Guatemala, Saudi Arabia, Thailand, Morocco

These are countries with a rich culture and heritage. They are mostly post-colonial countries still recovering from the effects of colonialism. They are the worst affected by the illicit trade of cultural property. These are the countries whose ancient art and antiquities were looted during colonial times and are still sporadically being illegally procured and sold. These countries would

These countries of the global south are dealing with the teething issues of newly sovereign countries: corruption, lack of institutions/their improper functioning, and hybrid democracy. They might/might not have the institutional capacity to properly care for the cultural property and artifacts. The primary objective of these countries would be to repatriate their stolen cultural property wherever they might be. They would want to establish legal and diplomatic pathways for restitution, disrupt trafficking networks, and sanction entities profiting from stolen cultural property.

Bloc 3: United Kingdom, France, Belgium, Netherlands, Russia, Spain, Germany, Australia

These are the traditional colonial powers (excluding Australia), including Britain, France, Belgium, and the Netherlands, that amassed vast collections of cultural artifacts during their imperial expansions. Many of these artifacts, taken through military expeditions, trade, or outright looting, are now housed in prominent museums such as the British Museum, the Louvre, and Belgium's Royal Museum for Central Africa. These nations emphasize the role of their institutions as custodians of global heritage, arguing that artifacts are preserved and made accessible to a global audience under their care. Their primary interest lies in maintaining the integrity of their collections while avoiding legal and diplomatic precedents that could require the widespread restitution of artifacts. They would want to focus on enhancing the documentation and provenance of their holdings and promoting initiatives like artifact-sharing agreements or long-term loans rather than outright repatriation. However, they face increasing criticism for perpetuating colonial legacies and may aim to balance their positions by selectively returning artifacts or engaging in collaborative cultural preservation programs.

Committee Goals (overall theme goals, not specific outcomes)

The goal of this topic is to gain a deeper understanding of how art and cultural artifacts are trafficked through illegal and improper channels and to identify effective strategies to address and prevent these activities. A special focus should be placed on the historical context of these black markets, particularly how colonial attitudes and exploitation have shaped and sustained the illicit trade of cultural property. By examining the historical legacy of colonialism, delegates should explore how these power dynamics continue to fuel demand for looted artifacts, with countries and institutions in the Global North playing a key role in perpetuating the black market through museums, private collections, and auction houses. This understanding should guide discussions on how to strengthen international law enforcement and improve provenance tracking to better prevent the illegal trade of cultural property. Efforts should focus on the repatriation of stolen artifacts, recognizing the importance of restoring cultural heritage to its rightful owners while balancing the need for global conservation. Delegates should collaborate on finding solutions that address both the cultural and economic consequences of art theft, aiming to create a more effective global framework for cultural preservation. Ultimately, the goal is to investigate the current heist as well as disrupt the flow of stolen cultural property, hold accountable those involved in the illicit trade, and protect humanity's shared cultural heritage for future generations.

Research Questions

1. What are the most common methods used by criminal organizations to launder stolen art, and how do they integrate these artworks into the legitimate market?
2. How do black market networks for art theft operate globally, and what role do auction houses, galleries, and private collectors play in this trade?
3. How do art thefts and the illicit trade in cultural artifacts destabilize local economies, and what are the broader political and cultural consequences for affected countries?
4. What impact does the black market trade of stolen art have on cultural heritage, authenticity, and the value of both stolen and forged works?
5. What challenges exist in tracking the provenance of stolen artworks, and how can technological innovations like blockchain and AI aid in disrupting the trafficking of stolen art?
6. How can international legal frameworks, conventions like UNESCO's 1970 Convention, and global law enforcement collaboration be strengthened to prevent the trafficking of stolen art and ensure its return to rightful owners?

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Topic B: Art Repatriation and Post-Colonial Legacy

Introduction

Delegates, welcome to Day 2 of UCIMUN, where we confront not only a historical legacy but a global crisis—art repatriation. Yesterday, we discussed a specific case of cultural theft, a heist, but today, we shifted our focus to the bigger picture.

The theft of art, artifacts, and items of cultural heritage has been a practice as old as war and conquest itself. The looting, plundering, and destruction of items holding cultural value are tied to themes of cultural domination and erasure. More than just an act of theft, looting art symbolizes cultural supremacy, the conquest of one culture over another, and the subsequent erasure of the culture of the losing side. Understanding the historical context of art theft is essential to understanding the contemporary issues of art theft, making for better-informed debates on repatriation, restitution, and justice. For this guide, this section will cover the colonial and post-colonial instances of art theft and will culminate in a discussion on the legacy and impact of art theft.

Systematic Looting during the Colonial Era

Colonial powers like Britain, France, and Belgium and their agents were influential actors during the 1700s-1900s on the world stage. They looted cultural artifacts from their colonies and viewed them as symbols of prestige, objects of study, and additions to their expanding collections. While framed as acts of preservation and scholarship, these acquisitions were more motivated by colonial exploitation. Colonial powers sought to document, classify, redefine, and appropriate the cultural heritage of the territories under imperial control. Fueled by a fascination

with the “exotic” and a deep belief in their “civilizing” mission, colonial powers orchestrated the large-scale removal of cultural property from the colonized countries.

One of the most notorious examples of colonial ransacking is the British Punitive Expedition of 1897 against the Benin Kingdom. As a response to the ambush of a British delegation by Benin forces, British forces ransacked the palace of the Oba of Benin and seized thousands of Benin Bronzes. Benin Bronzes are intricately crafted plaques and sculptures that provide an important historical and social record of the Kingdom of Benin. Today, many of them sit in Western institutions such as the British Museum, far removed from their original cultural context.

In India, the British seized the Kohinoor diamond—once a prized possession of Indian rulers—during the annexation of Punjab in 1849. Today, it rests in the British Crown Jewels, a silent witness to colonial conquest and lingering disputes over its ownership. Along with Koh-i-Noor Chola bronzes, delicate and intricate depictions of Hindu deities, are also an example of colonial loot of high-profile cultural property. Chola bronzes were removed from temples in Tamil Nadu and smuggled into England where they were displayed, auctioned, and dispersed among private collectors.

In Ottoman-ruled Greece, Thomas Bruce, the 7th Earl of Elgin, arranged for the removal of the Parthenon Marbles claiming to preserve them. Shipped to Britain in the early 19th century, they have remained in the British Museum ever since; Greece’s calls for their return, spanning decades, have yet to sway their custodians. The case of the Parthenon Marbles is one of the most well-known flashpoints in the debate on art repatriation.

Beyond the British Empire, other colonial powers also carried out looting and theft of cultural property in their colonial territories. In Africa, Belgian colonizers under King Leopold II

are infamous for their brutal and violent colonial expeditions. They looted ceremonial masks and tribal artifacts from the Congo Free State. These objects, rich in spiritual and cultural meaning, were shipped to Europe and are now housed in Belgium's Royal Museum for Central Africa, a stark reminder of the violent exploitation that accompanied colonial rule.

In Southeast Asia, the French followed suit. Statues and intricate carvings from Cambodia's Angkor Wat—masterpieces of Khmer artistry—were quietly removed in the late 19th century by colonial administrators and archaeologists. Many of these treasures that were once integral to the spiritual and architectural landscape of Cambodia now reside in the Musée Guimet in Paris, dislocated from their parent culture.

The legacy of this era lingers. The artifacts remain, housed in glass cases and museum halls, displayed as relics of a distant world while their countries of origin continue to seek restitution. Western institutions argue they are protecting global heritage and preserving history for the world. However, the calls for repatriation grow louder, pressing for the return of what was taken, and for the recognition of what was lost.

But now, as the world moves towards a greater understanding of historical justice, we face a complex and urgent question: What should happen to these artifacts? Should they be returned to the lands from which they were taken, or do they remain in their current homes for the sake of global accessibility? How would we address the question of which country to repatriate the cultural property to if it was taken from an empire that spanned multiple modern countries? Do these countries have the capacity, political, and economic bandwidth to take good care of these artifacts? Are there other issues in developing countries that would impede the upkeep of cultural property? This issue is not just about physical objects—it's about culture, history, and identity.

Description

The Scale of the Problem: A Global Crisis

Delegates, while the issue may seem focused on a handful of famous artifacts, the scope of this crisis is vast and global. Millions of cultural objects from all over the world currently reside in the collections of Western museums. These objects are more than just art; they represent the soul of civilizations, the memory of many peoples, and the history of nations. Artifacts such as the Koh-i-Noor Diamond, the Bust of Nefertiti, and the Sumerian Standard of Ur are all steeped in centuries of cultural significance and emotional attachment. Yet they reside far from their homelands.

Imagine visiting our very own museum—the Orange County Museum of Art at Costa Mesa. As you wander through its halls, you admire the stunning craftsmanship of objects from ancient Greece, Egypt, Africa, and Asia—artifacts that have traveled thousands of miles and centuries to get there. But have you ever stopped to think 'How did these objects end up here?' Were they truly "acquired" or were they looted during times of colonial conquest and war?

This is the reality that delegates must confront today. The global theft of cultural property isn't an isolated issue, nor a relic of the past. Rather, it's an ongoing crisis with deep roots in colonialism and imperialism. For nations whose heritage was stolen, it's more than retrieving their artifact, rather it's about reclaiming their history, their pride, and their identity.

For example, the Benin Bronzes are a powerful symbol of this global dilemma. These bronzes were looted in 1897 by British forces during the Benin Expedition and are now held in museums across the world. For the people of Nigeria, these bronzes are not just objects—they represent the cultural heart of their people, a link to their past, and an ongoing source of national pride. Yet, they remain in the British Museum, far from their ancestral home.

Colonial Legacy: Who Owns the Past?

Now, let's dive into the core of today's debate—ownership. Who owns cultural artifacts? Can any one country claim ownership over a piece of history that has been passed through time and empires? Can the descendants of those who took these artifacts truly lay claim to them?

Take the example of the Parthenon Marbles, also known as the Parthenon Sculptures. These masterpieces were taken from Greece by Lord Elgin in the early 19th century and have been in the British Museum ever since. The Greek government has long called for their return, claiming that these sculptures are a vital part of Greek identity and should be returned to their place of origin. The British Museum, on the other hand, insists that the marbles were legally acquired and that they are better protected and preserved in London. Who, then, is the rightful owner?

But the ownership of these objects is not just about legal title, it's also about cultural justice. When we speak of artifacts like the Koh-i-Noor Diamond, taken from India during British colonial rule, we must ask: Can the British monarchy continue to claim it as a symbol of their power, or should it return to the Indian people, who see it as part of their cultural heritage? Similarly, the Bust of Nefertiti, once owned by the Egyptian royal family, was taken to Germany in the early 20th century. Egypt continues to demand its return, arguing that it is an integral part of its national heritage.

But the issue gets even more complicated when considering ancient civilizations such as Sumer. The Standard of Ur, one of the most iconic pieces of ancient Sumerian culture, was stolen during the early 20th century and is now housed in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. But Sumer

no longer exists as a distinct political entity. So, who can claim ownership of this artifact—the modern state of Iraq or the people who once inhabited the land of Sumer centuries ago?

This issue, delegates, is a moral and ethical dilemma. It's not just about what the law says but rather who has the right to reclaim cultural property, and how we define historical justice in a globalized world.

Western Museums: Custodians or Gatekeepers?

As we consider the global debate over art repatriation, we must also address the role of Western museums. These institutions are viewed as the gatekeepers of world culture—places where anyone, anywhere, can come and experience the art and history of distant civilizations. The British Museum, for example, houses more than 2 million artifacts from across the globe, and each year millions of people come to learn from and admire these pieces.

But here's the catch: Are these institutions the best stewards of cultural heritage? Many argue that Western museums, with their vast resources and security systems, are the best equipped to preserve these artifacts for future generations. Should we take these treasures away from these institutions and risk losing them to decay, destruction, or theft in nations that lack the infrastructure to protect them?

Furthermore, are museums themselves guilty of gatekeeping access to art? The Louvre, which attracts over 9 million visitors each year, provides an opportunity for millions of people to see artifacts from the ancient world…yet how much of that access is shaped by the ethics of where these objects came from? If repatriation becomes widespread, might we lose the opportunity for global cultural exchange? And what happens to the educational role museums play if these objects are returned?

Western museums and institutions argue that the issue of restitution of cultural artifacts is not simply a matter of returning objects to their countries of origin; it is about ensuring that cultural property is preserved, studied, and shared with the world responsibly and sustainably. Many of these institutions do not claim ownership over items of cultural heritage. Rather they see themselves as custodians of global heritage. They assert that their primary mission is to use the resources and expertise and their disposal to provide a platform where art and cultural property can be housed, researched, and appreciated safely. An aim that transcends national borders and benefits humanity as a whole.

Museums like the British Museum and the Louvre contend that their space offers an unparalleled opportunity for people from diverse backgrounds to view and appreciate the world's collective cultural heritage. Since the museums house artifacts from various civilizations under one roof, it places the art and cultural property under the wider umbrella of humanity's art and cultural property. This, they argue, fosters a deeper understanding of human history, and aids in cross-cultural connection which otherwise would not have been possible. The educational value of these artifacts, they claim, is amplified in institutions that attract millions of visitors annually, providing unparalleled access to works that might otherwise remain hidden in local or poorly maintained facilities. Through the variety and multiplicity of exhibitions, research programs, and initiatives these institutions run, they can contribute significantly to ethnographic studies and global cultural literacy.

Another key point Western museums raise is the question of preservation. They argue that many of the source countries, despite their rightful claims to cultural property, may lack the resources, infrastructure, or political will to properly conserve cultural property. Corruption, illicit trafficking, and mismanagement are real concerns. And they may result in irremediable

damage to invaluable cultural property. Western institutions have advanced conservation techniques and expert curatorship. They claim they can safeguard these treasures for future generations better than many of the nations from which they were originally taken. Institutions often point to incidents where repatriated artifacts have been resold on the black market, destroyed in conflict zones, or simply neglected due to insufficient funding and expertise.

Furthermore, Western museums argue that cultural heritage is, by nature, global. While artifacts may have originated in specific locations, their historical significance and artistic value extend beyond national boundaries. The Rosetta Stone, for example, is not just an Egyptian artifact; it represents a breakthrough in our understanding of written language and, according to some, belongs to the world. Similarly, the Parthenon Marbles, taken from the Parthenon in Athens, are seen by institutions as symbols of classical civilization that have influenced cultures far beyond Greece. In this view, repatriation could limit the broader accessibility and appreciation of these artifacts, reducing their role in the global cultural dialogue.

Place these arguments in context. Does this mean cultural property that is being stored abroad will never find its way back home? Or are there policy proposals and initiatives that can help us achieve both goals: safe, responsible maintenance of cultural property that educates the world and recognition and address of historical wrongs?

Legal and Ethical Dimensions of Art Theft

Existing Legal Frameworks

Legal documents such as the 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export, and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property and the 1995 UNIDROIT Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects are a couple of

the leading international instruments to safeguard and repatriate stolen cultural property. In the 1950s, multiple nations of the global south were gaining independence from colonial rule and were imagining the contours of their nationhood. Around the same time, there was a burgeoning black market demand for cultural antiquities that was driving the dismemberment and theft of ancient monuments and sites in post-colonial countries. The 1970 UNESCO Convention was born out of a need to protect this cultural property and art and combat illegal trafficking. The Convention is a pioneering document, however, it still contains its flaws. For instance, it has a non-retroactivity clause that excludes items looted before 1970 from its purview. This makes it ineffective in dealing with colonial-era loot or any loot done before the signing of the Convention by the countries involved.

In parallel, the 1995 UNIDROIT Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects expanded protections from global art theft by addressing private law matters such as restitution claims—although its influence remains limited due to concerns over legal entanglements and the potential repercussions for museum holdings. There are also regional and bilateral pacts, like the US-Italy Cultural Property Agreement, that offer more swiftness and less bureaucratic challenges but are ultimately limited in scope and lack the global reach to address systemic challenges of art theft.

Colonial-era loot remains beyond the scope of most existing statutes, and gaps in provenance records make ownership claims an uphill battle. Disputes over jurisdiction—like Greece's long-running effort to reclaim the Parthenon Marbles from the British Museum—intensify the friction between cultural justice and institutional reluctance. In source nations such as India, domestic statutes, such as the 1972 Antiquities and Art Treasures Act, criminalize the

illegal export of heritage objects, however, enforcement often falls short due to limited resources and the complexity of organized theft rings.

The debate over the repatriation of cultural artifacts resists easy answers, prompting difficult questions: Can returning these objects truly right historical wrongs? How should justice be defined in this context? For countries such as Nigeria, Cambodia, and India, the return of looted art represents a chance to recover cultural identities torn away during periods of violent upheaval. Take the Benin Bronzes: far from being mere brass ornaments, they form a vivid testament to the Benin Kingdom's spiritual and cultural heritage. Seized in 1897 amid a British military incursion, many now reside in European museums. Cambodia's Khmer relics—stolen amid years of conflict—embody a similar link to a storied past. Those advocating for repatriation see it not as a gesture of goodwill but as an ethical necessity.

Institutions like the British Museum, on the other hand, insist that they serve as guardians of global heritage. From their viewpoint, pieces such as the Parthenon Marbles and the Rosetta Stone belong to everyone, rather than solely to the nations where they originated. They acknowledge regrets over colonial entanglements but argue that no host country can match their level of preservation and public access. Concerns around infrastructure likewise fuel resistance to returning artifacts, as opponents question whether countries like Greece can reliably house and safeguard iconic objects.

Ownership questions grow even more tangled when modern borders do not align with the civilizations that created these works. Consider Mesopotamian artifacts pilfered from Iraq after the 2003 invasion; should Iraq hold exclusive rights, or does the wider region that shares Mesopotamia's heritage also have a stake? Similarly, the Khmer Empire once spanned territory

now divided among Cambodia, Thailand, and Laos. Efforts to return these antiquities raise fraught questions: Which country's claim is strongest, and how do we determine that?

Complicating matters further, the private art market has historically operated with minimal oversight. Major auction houses and smaller dealers alike have sometimes overlooked dubious provenance, as highlighted by incidents involving Sotheby's and Christie's selling Cambodian artifacts linked to the Khmer Rouge period. While headline-grabbing restitutions—such as India's reclaimed Nataraja statue or Germany's return of the Benin Bronzes—underscore a willingness to correct past wrongs, an untold number of valuable objects remain caught in legal limbo or hidden away in private collections, feeding black markets and criminal enterprises.

When executed thoughtfully, repatriation can serve as a bridge rather than a wall. Germany's move to return the Benin Bronzes did more than recognize historical injustices; it also built diplomatic goodwill. But by lacking uniform standards, repatriation efforts can appear haphazard or inconsistent. Why might one museum choose to give back contested treasures while another digs in its heels? Such contradictions can sour public perception and impede the openness needed for meaningful cultural collaboration.

Ultimately, the ethics of repatriation ask us to look beyond mere possession. This is not simply about who physically holds an artifact but about the resonance these objects carry for nations, communities, and humanity as a whole. Thoughtful returns can restore more than just precious items; they can heal relationships, reaffirm dignity, and foster a collective sense of guardianship over our shared past. It's an ongoing process and one that demands grappling with the legacy of exploitation and the complex realities of preserving human history. A neat

resolution may never emerge, but this conversation is indispensable—and it's been postponed far too long.

Path Forward: Reconciliation and Restitution

There are successful examples of repatriation of cultural property. In 2023, the Manchester Museum made a groundbreaking move by returning over 174 artifacts to the Anindilyakwa people of Groote Eylandt in Australia. In November 2023, the Manhattan District Attorney announced the return of more than 1,400 antiquities collectively valued at $10 million to India. These actions are a victory for reconciliation and cultural justice. They set a powerful precedent for museums around the world, showing that successful repatriation is possible.

Conclusion

Delegates, we are at a pivotal moment in history. The choices you make in this room will shape how the world confronts its colonial past and moves forward with a commitment to justice and cultural integrity. The path you choose today could set the tone for global cooperation on issues of cultural heritage, historical justice, and reconciliation. This isn't just about statues or diamonds—it's about the soul of nations and the very identity of people. The decisions made here will ripple through history, influencing how we define the future of global cultural exchange and the ownership of history. Now is the time for action. The clock is ticking!

Bloc Positions

Bloc 1: U.S, Australia, Mexico, Guatemala

This bloc includes Indigenous, Aboriginal, and First Nations groups from countries like the United States, Australia, Guatemala, and Mexico, where Indigenous populations have historically been marginalized by central governments. Members of this bloc represent communities whose cultural heritage has often been taken without consent, displayed in national museums, or traded in private markets. These groups advocate for the return of sacred artifacts, ancestral remains, and cultural property that hold spiritual, historical, and community significance. Their position is that repatriation is not only about historical justice but also about preserving their cultural identities, which are still under threat due to systemic marginalization. Members of this bloc may call for international recognition of Indigenous cultural sovereignty, frameworks to ensure the return of sacred artifacts, and reparative measures for the historical injustices they have endured. They may seek alliances with countries affected by decolonization to amplify their voices in global forums.

Bloc 2: Egypt, Iraq, Cambodia, India, Nepal, Indonesia, South Africa

These are the nations that experienced the direct consequences of colonialism, including the systematic removal of cultural artifacts. Often referred to as the "Global South" or developing nations. Members of this bloc argue that artifacts taken during colonial rule represent stolen cultural property and should be returned to their rightful owners. They believe that it is not the responsibility of the thief to safeguard stolen goods and that claims of "better preservation" abroad are paternalistic, patronizing, and dismissive of their capabilities. These countries have felt the ripple effects of colonial exploitation in other sectors as well like agriculture, industry,

and the wider economy in general. They see repatriation as part of a broader demand for redress. Their primary interests include strengthening international frameworks for restitution, ensuring that returned artifacts are preserved responsibly, and reclaiming their heritage as a way to rebuild cultural identity and pride.

Bloc 3: United Kingdom, France, Belgium, Netherlands, Russia, Spain, Germany

This bloc includes traditional colonial powers such as Britain, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, and other nations in the "Global North" or developed world. These countries house world-renowned museums like the British Museum, the Louvre, and the Royal Museum for Central Africa, which hold artifacts from across the globe. Members of this bloc argue that their institutions serve as stewards of global heritage, ensuring that artifacts are preserved, studied, and made accessible to a global audience. They emphasize the importance of their collections in boosting tourism and cultural diplomacy and are hesitant to set legal or diplomatic precedents that could lead to large-scale repatriation. Instead, they are likely to advocate for artifact-sharing agreements, long-term loans, and collaborative conservation projects as alternatives to outright restitution. While facing increasing criticism for perpetuating colonial legacies, members of this bloc maintain that the stability and resources of their institutions ensure the best care for cultural artifacts.

Bloc 4: Nigeria, Greece, Thailand, Morocco, Saudi Arabia. Poland, Italy

This block can be understood to be a shadow or a hybrid block. Members of this block are not part of a formal alliance or agreement but agree with each other on a few critical issues. These include non-state actors, private collectors, auction houses, museums, and other

organizations with a vested interest in art and cultural property. Potential issues that can bring members together include profit, preservation, restitution, and justice. A potential example of Members of this alliance can include monarchies or royalties that are willing to pawn off their own art and antiquities to private collectors/museums in the West for monetary or other favors. Another potential example could include organizations and interest groups within Western countries advocating for the return and repatriation of stolen and illegally acquired cultural property. This bloc is not formalized and should be understood as a space for backdoor dealings rather than a traditional alliance with common interests. This block is for you to advance the interests of your country—even through morally ambiguous means. So be creative and play around when dealing with characters, even if they sit across the aisle! This bloc is fluid, operating more as a network of shifting alliances than a structured coalition. Deals are made behind closed doors, whether in museum boardrooms, private galleries, or high-stakes auction houses, where cultural property is not just history—it is currency. Members of this bloc may work across ideological lines, advancing their own interests in ways that are pragmatic, strategic, and sometimes morally ambiguous. Whether negotiating repatriation settlements, exploiting legal loopholes, or using influence to control the narrative around art ownership, this bloc thrives in spaces where diplomacy meets discretion, and history meets high value.

Committee Goals

Delegates should enter the committee prepared to make compromises with other nations. They should expect intense moderated caucuses and necessary collaboration during unmoderated caucuses. The fates of notable cultural objects should be discussed, but as examples, rather than as the focus of debate. The resolutions they make may not offer any particular nation advantage,

but rather, should focus on benefiting their blocs as a whole. Delegates should exit the committee with a better understanding of the ongoing process of decolonization, and how it extends into the socio-cultural sector. They should strike a balance between justice and preservation, and recognize the nuance of the topic. They should respect the importance of art– not only how it affects the integrity of a nation's identity but also how it can shape policy and motivate a country's actions. They should acknowledge the human right, as declared by the United Nations, to enjoy the arts. They should know that the conclusion they reach will set the precedent for how art repatriation is handled in future decolonization efforts.

Research Questions

1. What important works of art has your country produced that are integral to its identity? What do you suppose would happen if it were to be robbed of those objects?
2. If your country is, or were to, face extreme political instability, how would you protect your country's valued works of art?
3. How can you compromise with opposing blocs and balance justice with preservation and accessibility? Does it have to be one or the other?
4. How will existing documents published by the UN ensure the human right to art and artistic expression affect your resolution?
5. A common argument not addressed in this guide is that repatriating art will not "make up" for the devastation colonialism has caused. What do you think about this perspective?
6. How does art repatriation relate to the larger global process of decolonization?

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