

In the debate on the substance of the problem, member states were divided into three fairly distinct groupings. African and Asian nations maintained that international peace was being endangered by the unsettled situation in Tunisia and Morocco and that these questions were not of French domestic jurisdiction since France itself took its stand on the provisions of the protectorate treaties. If these treaties were valid international instruments, they could not be interpreted unilaterally by one of the parties to them; and if the other party charged that they were being violated, the only way to determine the validity of the charges was to examine the question in an international forum like the United Nations. Many of the African and Asian speakers agreed that Tunisia and Morocco had made progress under French guidance; nevertheless France had abused its privileges as a protecting power and, by permanent military occupation, mercantilist economic policies, land grants to French settlers, and, above all, by direct control of the administration of these territories, had in effect reduced Tunisia and Morocco to colonial status. Representative government had not been established in the protectorates; on the contrary, it was contended, French policies sought to establish the principle of joint Franco-Tunisian sovereignty. Finally, African and Asian representatives argued that Article 55 of the Charter regarding the promotion of human rights was being violated.

The African and Asian states were strongly supported by the representatives of the Soviet bloc, who contended, in addition, that Tunisian territory was being used to further the military policies of the United States and the North Atlantic Treaty nations.

At the opposite pole from the African, Asian and Soviet countries was a smaller group of states including Australia, Belgium, South Africa, and the United Kingdom. These states considered that the protectorate treaties, entrusting the French Government with responsibility for the external affairs of Tunisia and Morocco, placed these questions within the domestic jurisdiction of France. The proceedings of the San Francisco Conference, it was argued, made it clear that the states signing the Charter did so on the understanding that the United Nations should not have supervisory responsibilities with respect to dependent territories, except for trust territories. Thus the United Nations could properly interfere only if international peace and security were threatened, which, in their view, was not the case. Few, if any, member states had fully achieved the ideals set out in Article 55 of the Charter, and it would be of no benefit for the United Nations as a whole to become involved in acrimonious debates on human rights.

A third group of states, including Canada, Israel, New Zealand, Norway, the United States, and a majority of Latin American nations, took an intermediate position. They did not consider that the Tunisian and Moroccan questions represented a threat to international peace. While their views on the competence issue were not identical, they were generally agreed that the United Nations was competent under the Charter at least to discuss the Tunisian and Moroccan problems. Attention was drawn by this group to French liberal traditions, to the present role of France in the free world, and