

## **Recent World Crises Simulation**

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The Recent World Crises Simulation places students in the position of members of a United Nations Commission seeking to find workable political solutions for four regions (Bosnia, Northern Ireland, Kosovo and West Bank) that have experienced considerable warfare and violence in recent years. This short political simulation can serve as a stimulus to a lively history discussion on how each crisis situation has developed over time and how the feasibility of each political option has changed? Students could reconsider the historical background of a crisis from a new perspective and reassess the current diplomatic situation. Individual student or group research projects could identify significant turning points in the development of each situation and assess the most important factors promoting or inhibiting a resolution at those significant dates. The simulation will enhance student interest in related class content and assignments while being efficient in the use of class time and very adaptable by the instructor.

The Recent World Crises Simulation is effective in promoting class discussion, active learning and critical thinking. Students enjoy the classroom exercise and their interest is promoted by its focus on issues relevant to today. Academics have recognized these factors in student motivation while extolling the educational virtues of active learning and critical thinking.<sup>1</sup> Simulations can be utilized to support a variety of educational activities based on cooperative and/or constructivist learning theory.<sup>2</sup> Research has shown that simulations enhance student retention of knowledge, foster

student interest in the subject matter and develop student communication skills and self-awareness.<sup>3</sup>

These four crises have been selected and paired based on the similarities in their historic and cultural circumstances. The situations in Bosnia and Northern Ireland pose similar dilemmas. The larger country (Yugoslavia/United Kingdom) once controlled all three areas but ethnic and religious differences prompted independence efforts, including violent ones, which ultimately led to the formation of independent countries (Croatia/Ireland). However, the disposition of the third area (Bosnia/Northern Ireland) is problematic. Likewise, the situations in Kosovo and the West Bank pose similar dilemmas. They each are the historic homelands of the country that currently controls them (Yugoslavia/Israel) and the focus of nationalistic pride and strong emotions. However, the current ethnic and religious composition of their population differs greatly from the country dominating them while being very similar to an adjacent country whose culture they share (Albania/Jordan).

An open discussion of all possible political options and an analysis of those options from a neutral perspective would enhance the development of critical thinking skills. Students may have preconceived ideas about the various crises that might limit their consideration of political options and influence their decisions. Therefore, the crisis and its regional location are not identified and the names of countries, ethnic groups and religions are fictitious. Students are provided with the ethnic and religious composition of the three countries/regions involved in their particular crisis as well as a brief general historical background to the situation. With this limited amount of information, students

consider the relative merits of a series of political/diplomatic alternatives and ultimately reach a consensus on which option is the best possible solution for a particular crisis.

The Recent World Crises Simulation is designed in two stages for maximum adaptability. The first stage requires 10 to 15 minutes of class time and the second 15 to 30 minutes depending upon the instructor's desire for a thorough examination and discussion in student groups of the relative merits of the various political options. The instructor might use one stage independently, might conduct both stages on the same day or on consecutive days, or might have a number of classes between the two stages. The simulation could serve as the opening activity of a unit to raise pertinent issues, to prompt new perspectives on the situation and to stimulate interest in related assignments or research topics. Conversely, the instructor could present related content and students could conduct individual or collaborative research and analysis with the simulation being utilized as the culminating exercise where students could demonstrate their command of the material. A third alternative would be to use the first stage as the opening activity and the second stage as the concluding exercise of a teaching unit.

The simulation provides fertile ground for class discussion by raising a number of comparative issues that could be considered in a variety of ways. The four situations can be compared and contrasted with each other or with the actual crises that they represent. Class discussion could focus on comparing the decisions of different student groups or the identity of the crises could be revealed and discussion focused on the dilemmas posed by recommendations for the generic case that conflict with student opinions in the actual cases. For each crisis, students could contrast their recommendations with historical

agreements, reassess the current diplomatic situation and reconsider the historical background from new perspectives.

The teacher could assign a variety of individual or group research projects associated with the discussion topics given above. The simulation could also serve as the stimulus for a number of research topics/writing assignments for each crisis. Students could investigate the historical background, the changing feasibility of various political options at different times in history, the actual proposed or enacted agreements and the role of particular countries or groups of countries in effecting the final outcome. Students could address these questions while considering the crucial decision points in each crisis: Bosnia - 1918, 1941, 1991, 1995 and today; Northern Ireland - 1922, 1968, 1998 and today; West Bank - 1937, 1948, 1967, 1973, 1993 and today; and Kosovo -1912, 1918, 1941, 1991, 1998 and today.

### **Simulation Materials**

Simulation materials include a set of generic student instructions, the essential information for the Gamma scenario and the essential information for the Omega scenario. The instructions describe the students' role as members of a United Nations commission and list the possible political/diplomatic solutions to be considered by each student group to resolve their crisis. The Gamma scenario that applies to Bosnia and Northern Ireland includes a brief historical background followed by two similar crisis situations that provide the ethnic and religious divisions within each country involved in each crisis using fake names for countries, ethnic groups and religions. Below that is the identical information but with the identity of the crisis and the actual names for the countries, ethnic groups and religions. The Omega scenario that applies to Kosovo and

the West Bank provides the same information for these two similar crises. The instructor can create class handouts by copying the generic instructions to students along with the appropriate historical background and hypothetical situation for each crisis.

### **Conduct of Simulation**

The first stage of the simulation focuses on the disposition of the disputed area in each crisis. The instructor should divide the class into small groups of three students each and announce that each group will simulate a United Nations Commission seeking to find a resolution to a particular world crisis. Two or three student groups should be assigned to consider each situation and the appropriate scenario and situation distributed to each group. Each group should discuss their situation independently and decide on their recommended solution from among the following: Remain part of the larger country, merge with the smaller country, become an autonomous region of either country or become an independent country.

Class discussion could compare and contrast each group's assessment of the situation and resulting recommendations with the decisions of other groups. Each group working on the same crisis could explain the logic of their decision and the merits of their recommendation, or, groups focusing on the same crisis could consolidate and negotiate a new consensus decision for the larger group. The teacher could facilitate this discussion with transparencies of the scenarios and situations to show the similarities between crises. How did different student groups determine different solutions for the same crisis or very similar crises?

The teacher should consider at what point during the first stage (or later in stage 2), it would be most useful to reveal the identity of each crisis and the countries involved.

Does that knowledge change any student attitudes or reveal the biases or preconceived ideas of individual students concerning a situation? What factors are not addressed in the simulation that must be considered to resolve the crisis? Are these other considerations of more importance in these crises than the relative numbers of the various religious and ethnic groups? How has the historical experiences of the various groups affected their views on this crisis? Which historical developments are promoting or inhibiting a resolution to the crisis?

Stage 2 - The second stage of the simulation offers a wide variety of possible political solutions to each crisis and could prompt a fertile discussion of alternate political structures. Most people living in democratic countries assume majority rule is the proper basis for political power, but majority rule can mean majority domination and discrimination or persecution against the minority. If either the autonomous region or the independent country option is chosen in the first stage, then the most suitable political process/structure must be determined from the following list: majority rule, a required supermajority that protects the minority, equal representation for each group, a legislature with one assembly for each group or a shared executive with a division of power between the president and/or prime minister and/or cabinet positions.

Divide the class into small groups of three students each and provide each group with the essential information for their crisis. Have each group independently discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the various options for political process or structure. Which options would the majority or minority prefer? Which options seem to be reasonable compromises acceptable to each side? Which options are the least reasonable or most inflammatory solutions? Which option would you choose to solve this crisis?

Then the student group should reach a consensus decision on their recommended solution.

Class discussion could compare and contrast each group's assessment of the situation and resulting recommendations with the actual situation. Using maps of the four regions and transparencies of the Gamma scenario and the Omega scenario, the teacher could facilitate a discussion of the significant historical events and developments that have led to each recent crisis. Student recommendations could be compared to historical proposals or signed agreements. Discussion could also focus on the changing feasibility of various options at different times in history or on the role and influence of particular countries or groups of countries in effecting the final outcome. Have recent events made some options less feasible and others more feasible? What future events would promote a decision or inhibit one?

### **Other Possibilities**

The situations of Kashmir and Lebanon are somewhat analogous to the Gamma scenario of Bosnia and Northern Ireland. The situations in Tibet, Chechnya, Timor and Puerto Rico have some similarities to each other and could provide the basis for a third scenario. The movements to separate Quebec from Canada or to reunite Taiwan with China also have some similarities for a fourth scenario. Research on the ethnic and religious composition of these and related areas would enable the instructor to conduct a similar simulation and class discussion/activities on any of these world issues.

## **Gamma Scenario**

Alpha once controlled all three areas but ethnic and religious differences have prompted independence efforts, including violent ones, which ultimately led to the formation of the independent country of Beta. However, the disposition of the third area, Gamma, is problematic as a result of both ethnic and religious animosities. Violence in recent years has rekindled old hatreds, solidified ethnic identities and prompted the emergence of fervent ethnic leaders who have thwarted political compromises. Yet all sides have been drained economically and exhausted emotionally by the continued destructive violence and are seeking a resolution to the conflict.

### **Gamma Situation 1**

Beta – 4.7 million population, Ethnic Makeup 78% Betas, 12% Alphas, 1% Gammas  
Religious Makeup 77% Blue, 11% Green, 1.2% Yellow

Gamma – 3.4 million population, Ethnic Makeup 40% Alphas, 38% Gammas, 22% Betas  
Religious Makeup 15% Blue, 31% Green, 40% Yellow

Alpha – 11.2 million population, Ethnic Makeup 63% Alphas, 14% Deltas, 6% Kappas  
Religious Makeup 65% Green, 19% Yellow, 4% Blue

### **Bosnia Situation [Gamma 1]** Source: World Almanac 1999

Croatia – 4.7 million population, Ethnic Makeup 78% Croat, 12% Serb, 1% Muslim  
Religious Makeup 77% Catholic, 11% Orthodox, 1.2% Muslim

Bosnia – 3.4 million population, Ethnic Makeup 40% Serb, 38% Muslim, 22% Croat  
Religious Makeup 15% Catholic, 31% Orthodox, 40% Muslim

Yugoslavia – 11.2 million population,  
Ethnic Makeup 63% Serbs, 14% Albanians, 6% Montenegrin  
Religious Makeup 65% Orthodox, 19% Muslim, 4% Catholic

### **Gamma Situation 2**

Alpha – 59 million population, Ethnic Makeup 81.5% Alphas, 9.6% Kappas  
Religious Makeup 71% Red, 22.5% Blue

Gamma – 1.7 million population,  
Ethnic Makeup 58% Alphas and Kappas, 42% Betas  
Religious Makeup 58% Red, 42% Blue

Beta – 3.6 million population, Ethnic Makeup 93% Betas, 3% Alphas  
Religious Makeup 93% Blue, 4% Red

### **Northern Ireland Situation [Gamma 2]**

Source: World Almanac 1999 and New York Times

United Kingdom – 59 million population, Ethnic Makeup 81.5% English, 9.6% Scottish  
Religious Makeup 71% Protestant, 22.5% Catholic

Northern Ireland – 1.7 million population,  
Ethnic Makeup 58% English and Scottish, 42% Irish  
Religious Makeup 58% Protestant, 42% Catholic

Ireland – 3.6 million population, Ethnic Makeup 93% Irish, 3% English  
Religious Makeup 93% Catholic, 4% Protestant

## **Omega Scenario**

Sigma, Omega and Delta are adjacent areas that had all been in the same large empire for several centuries. The countries of Sigma and Delta were created in the 20<sup>th</sup> century to remove those people from the control of a foreign empire and give them national self-determination. The disposition of Omega has been problematic. Omega is the historic homeland of the country of Sigma and the focus of nationalistic pride and strong emotions in Sigma, however, the ethnic and religious composition of Omega's current population differs greatly from Sigma as a whole. Instead, Omega is ethnically and religiously very similar to Delta, and the people of the two areas identify culturally with each other. Both Delta and Sigma have controlled and administered Omega at different times during the past sixty years. Sigma currently controls Omega and has for several decades, but the ethnic and religious differences between them have resulted in political strife and violent independence efforts by the people of Omega.

### **Omega Situation 1**

Sigma – 11.2 million population, Ethnic Makeup 63% Sigmas, 14% Deltans, 6% Kappas  
Religious Makeup 65% Green, 19% Yellow, 4% Blue  
Omega – 1.8 million population, Ethnic Makeup 90% Deltans, 10% Sigmas  
Religious Makeup 67% Yellow, 25% Green, 8% Blue  
Delta – 3.3 million population, Ethnic Makeup 95% Deltans, 3% Gammas  
Religious Makeup 70% Yellow, 20% Green, 10% Blue

### **Kosovo Situation [Omega 1] Source: World Almanac 1999 and New York Times**

Yugoslavia – 11.2 million population,  
Ethnic Makeup 63% Serbs, 14% Albanians, 6% Montenegrin  
Religious Makeup 65% Orthodox, 19% Muslim, 4% Catholic  
Kosovo – 1.8 million population, Ethnic Makeup 90% Albanian, 10% Serbs  
Religious Makeup 67% Muslim, 25% Orthodox, 8% Catholic  
Albania – 3.3 million population, Ethnic Makeup 95% Albanian, 3% Greek  
Religious Makeup 70% Muslim, 20% Orthodox, 10% Catholic

### **Omega Situation 2**

Sigma – 5.5 million population, Ethnic Makeup 82% Sigmas, 18% Deltas  
Religious Makeup 82% Orange, 14% Yellow, 2% Brown  
Omega – 1.5 million population, Ethnic Makeup 90% Deltas, 10% Sigmas  
Religious Makeup 85% Yellow, 10% Orange, 5% Brown  
Delta – 4.2 million population Ethnic Makeup 98% Deltas  
Religious Makeup 92% Yellow, 8% Brown

### **West Bank Situation [Omega 2] Source: CIA World Factbook 1996**

Israel – 5.5 million population, Ethnic Makeup 82% Jewish, 18% non Jewish (Arab)  
Religious Makeup 82% Jewish, 14% Muslim, 2% Christian  
West Bank – 1.5 million population Ethnic Makeup 83% Arab, 17% Jewish  
Religious Makeup 85% Muslim, 10% Jewish, 5% Christian  
Jordan – 4.2 million population Ethnic Makeup 98% Arab  
Religious Makeup 92% Muslim, 8% Christian

## Recent World Crises Simulation

### Student Instructions

You are members of a United Nations Commission seeking to find a workable political solution for a region that has experienced considerable warfare and violence. All sides are exhausted by the perpetual conflict and are seeking peace. Yet, they continue to distrust their neighbors and hold great animosity for the loss of many loved ones. They do not want to give up on the issues they fought for or their loved ones will have died in vain. Your job as a UN Commission is to determine which of the following options is the fairest to the parties concerned and the most viable for promoting long term peace in the area: remain part of the larger country, merge with the smaller country, become an autonomous region of either country or become an independent country. If either the autonomous region or the independent country option is chosen, then the most suitable political process/structure must be determined from the following list: majority rule, a required supermajority that protects the minority, equal representation for each group, a legislature with one assembly for each group or a shared executive with a division of power between the president and/or prime minister and/or cabinet positions.

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<sup>1</sup> Caine, R. N., and Caine G. (1994) *Making Connections: Teaching and the Human Brain*. Menlo Park, CA: Innovative Learning, Addison-Wesley; Abbott, J. and Ryan, Terence (1999) 'Constructing knowledge, reconstructing schooling,' *Educational Leadership*, 57, pp. 66-69.

<sup>2</sup> Johnson, D., Johnson, R., & Smith K. (1991) *Active Learning: Cooperation in the College Classroom*. Edina, MN: Interaction Book; Brooks, J. G. and Brooks, M. G. (1993) *In Search of Understanding: The Case for Constructivist Classrooms*, Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

<sup>3</sup> Druckman, D. (1995) 'The educational effectiveness of interactive games,' *Simulation and Gaming across Disciplines and Cultures*, D. Crookall and A Kiyoshi, eds. London: Sage Publications, pp. 178-187; Randel, J. M., Morris, B. A., Wetzell, C. D., & Whitehall, B. V. (1992) 'The effectiveness of games for educational purposes: A review of recent research,' *Simulation and Gaming: An International Journal*, 23, pp. 261-276.